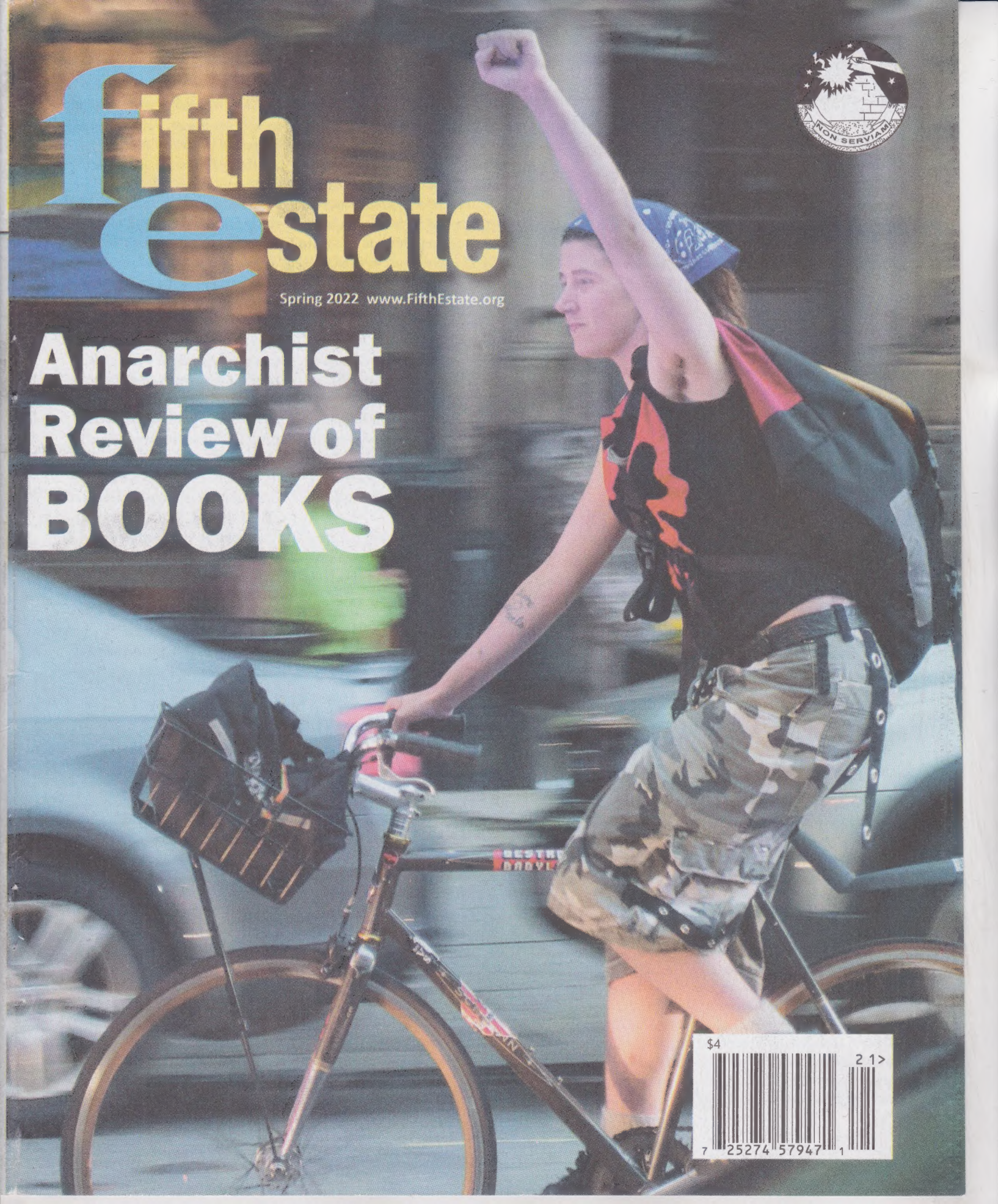


fifth estate

Spring 2022 www.FifthEstate.org

Anarchist Review of BOOKS



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2016 Festival, "Ni Femme, Ni Clowne" photo: N. Nawrocki

Montreal International Anarchist Theatre Festival 2022

After a two year absence, the annual Montreal International Anarchist Theatre Festival is back!

This time, given all the uncertainty around the pandemic, travel, closures and more, we decided to play safe and go virtual! We invite all of you from around the world to please join us May 17th to May 24th, 2022 on our website—for free—and see what you've been missing. Watch our website or email us for details.

anarchistetheatrefestival.com/en/news
festivaltheatreanarchiste@yahoo.ca

Creative Rebels Conference Italy, August 21-27, 2022

The Creative Rebels conference in Italy this August seeks to highlight anarchist projects/initiatives that have found ways to remain sustainable during these turbulent times. Five days of the week-long conference will feature presentations by members of these projects/initiatives, each day focusing on one of the following themes: identity, education, environment, social structure, and economy.

This will primarily be an educational and networking event.

Welcome!

Welcome to another issue of the Fifth Estate Anarchist Review of Books. We haven't changed our title permanently; just letting readers know what to expect inside this edition. We also haven't changed our belief that it is direct action in the streets and in the woods, and creating communities of resistance and rebellion that are needed so critically as conditions worsen on almost every level. We read and learn to increase our commitment in our struggles.

The pandemic, Russia's invasion of Ukraine, climate crisis, inflation, and rise of a coherent proto-fascist movement suddenly creates the feeling that the rug of comparative security most of us experience in North America could suddenly be pulled out from under us.

This shouldn't mean resignation or passivity, but rather a real-

ization that we need each other not only to combat what threatens us and the planet, but to maintain a sense of solidarity and mutual aid that will sustain us through these dark times.

This edition is Spring 2022 directly following our Fall number, so you haven't missed an issue. These designations are mostly for newsstand presentation. To follow our publication sequence, see our masthead on the next page where the volume number is displayed that corresponds to what year of publishing we're in, and the issue number in that volume. Also, the number 411 refers to the issue published since the magazine began in 1965.

Lots of people cooperated to make this issue happen. Thanks to all.

Cover photo: Dennis Fox,
 Occupy Boston - 2011

There will be a 400-person limit on attendance, including staff, presenters and attendees. If you are interested in presenting or volunteering, please contact us at creativerebels@protonmail.com.

We are currently seeking volunteers, presenters, performers and fundraisers. Go to bit.ly/3myUWne to register to attend, or to be part of the planning.

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Ukraine: another war, another victory for the state

As we write at the end of March, the Russian invasion of Ukraine is at full fury with deaths and destruction increasing daily. By the time you read this, the conflict will hopefully have ended. If not, any number of terrible scenarios may have taken place or are still continuing.

The best outcome will be the thwarting of Vladimir Putin's plans by Ukrainian resistance, but also by the overthrow of the Russian president by popular forces within Russia. The consequences of a victory for the invaders would be a disaster and only come at a horrendous price.

The plight of the people of Ukraine is presented with fully appropriate sympathy in 24/7 news cycles. However, it doesn't take much speculation to understand why this same type of coverage isn't afforded to the victims of U.S. wars of aggression, although they have purposefully inflicted exactly the same devastation on countries like Iraq and Afghanistan as the Russian army is currently raining down upon Ukraine. The current war is never mentioned without the adjective "brutal" placed in front of the noun as if the results of this one was

uniquely horrible and different from the consequences of all wars.

The way the media direct people to sympathize with and feel sorrow for the Ukrainian victims of war, something not expressed for others, raises militarism to a positive feature of the situation rather than one of its causes, and portrays Putin as another Hitler. However, take away the crawler at the bottom of the screen and substitute the names of cities like Baghdad, Fullujah, Tripoli, Sana'a, or Gaza, and the extent of destruction is identical.

This time the "war criminal" is the ruler of the West's imperial enemy and the victims are white, thus the sympathy, solidarity, and horror expressed across the world to Ukraine is one never offered to the usual targets of the U.S. and its allies.

Who wins here? The weapons manufacturers, the U.S. and Canadian petroleum industry. NATO, and the West are willing to fight the Russians to the last Ukrainian, and see the Russian military dealt a blow similar to what they experienced in their defeat in Afghanistan in the 1980s.

Nationalism and militarism win all round. It's understandable that Ukrainians want to defend their country under attack, but nationalists are taking advantage of this desire to justify the worst ideologies that bolster the nation state, ultimately the cause of all of this mess.

The grand schemes of rulers throughout history for power, wealth, land, and ideology have made civilization a bloody sword taking millions to their deaths. For the past two thousand years, whole populations have suffered constant outrages perpetrated by elites for whom militarism has been a way of life. Consider Carthage, the Crusader massacre of Jerusalem, periodic wars in medieval Europe, the genocide of native



Illustration by Gunduz Aghayev / gunduzaghayev.com

peoples by colonial forces, the world wars, the holocaust of European Jews, the Turkish genocide of Armenians.

This is the state; this is its legacy and its present.

The current situation can be seen as the affirmation of American militarism and its projection of armed force anywhere in the world at any time of its choosing. In liberal circles, suspicion of endless U.S. wars has evaporated, curiously now only existing within the politics of the far-right wing. Liberals evince a newfound patriotism, expressing pride that the U.S. military is using its might this time for good. To them, the history of Ukraine began on the day of the invasion with no understanding of the role NATO and U.S. played in precipitating the crisis by extending NATO and surrounding Russia with a hostile military alliance. To bring up either the disparity in reaction to the victims of war, or to suggest that one ought to examine the causes of this conflict brings charges of being "pro-Putin" or "You sound like Trump." The implied accusation of being "un-American" is dredged up from the 1950s.

There's a mood in the U.S. similar to what was present in the country prior to its entry into World War I. The flags are flying, people are marching, doubters are berated, the war drums are beating. The symbols of war drive men to war.

In the meantime, the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* has moved their Doomsday Clock up to 100 seconds to midnight. Environmental disasters, global warming, social blight and

Continued on page 47

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A Carnival Parade of Political Forms

Exploring the possibilities of reinventing ourselves



The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity
David Graeber and David Wengrow
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2021

ERIC LAURSEN

"In one sense," David Graeber and David Wengrow write, "this book is simply trying to lay down foundations for a new world history." *Simply?*

As the title indicates, *The Dawn of Everything: A New History of Humanity* is an extremely ambitious, 692-page book. It's also a bit of an anomaly in contemporary anarchist writing, which tends to shy away from Big History, with its overtones of imperial sweep and Smart White Guys explaining to everyone else How It Went Down.

But Big History usually traces a linear narrative of human development and progress: from hunter-gatherers to farmers to more complex forms of social organization to capitalism, the State, and industry. That's roughly been the story we've told ourselves—or that our betters have told us—at least since Rousseau wrote his *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality* in the 18th century.

The Genevan philosopher put a pessimistic spin on the tale, framing it as a fall from grace, a modern version of the story of Adam and Eve, but later speculators quickly turned it into a hopeful story of human progress, of genius producing feats of innovation that were only possible in large, centralized states run by a knowledge elite.

Graeber (a good friend who died in 2020) and Wengrow set out to knock down this historical house of cards, assisted by several decades of new evidence and new suppositions from their respective fields of anthropology and archaeology. At the least, they call it seriously into question.

Even though they never mention it, they've also produced a much-needed continuation of the project that Peter Kropotkin began 120 years ago with *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution*. Kropotkin set out to show that cooperation, as much as competition, was critical to human development. In so doing, he created an alternative to both the historical ma-

terialism of the Marxists and the combination of capitalist economics and social Darwinism that became mainstream thinking at about the same time.

Taking his point a step further, the Davids demonstrate that human history is far less linear and determined than we've been taught by either side. Human societies have moved back and forth between hunter-gatherer and agricultural modes, sometimes annually. They've adopted and discarded centralized, top-down political structures, and abandoned year-round settlements to become nomads. And, vice versa. They've moved in and out of large urban environments and constructed massive city-like settlements that they occupied only part of the time, possibly only for rituals. And, they've adopted and discarded institutions like slavery over and over again.

Contrary to the patronizing European assertion that Native Americans (for instance) lived in a separate time, a "mythic consciousness fundamentally different from our own," and therefore didn't practice politics in the way we moderns do, the authors point to example after example demonstrating that not only did they practice politics, but developed political theories that they tested, implemented, and could compare critically against the ones they encountered in settler communities.

There was no original state of innocence, equality, or grace for humans to fall from, because humans have always experimented with different forms of political and social organization, even in the face of severe material limitations.

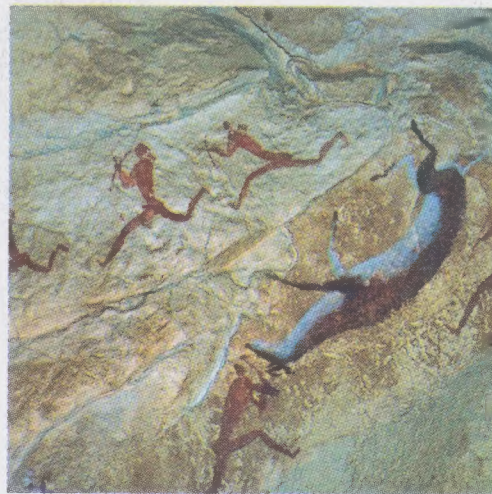
That's not what mainstream or even Marxist historians, philosophers, and political scientists tend to want to hear these days. When these authorities "argue about the origin of the state in ancient Peru or China," Graeber and Wengrow

What if, instead of telling a story about how our species fell from some idyllic state of equality, we ask how we came to be trapped in such tight conceptual shackles that we can no longer even imagine the possibility of reinventing ourselves? (from *The Dawn of Everything*)

say, “what they are really doing is projecting that rather unusual constellation of elements backwards: typically, by trying to find a moment when something like sovereign power came together with something like an administrative system.”

When they find evidence of large, complex urban developments in places where these things are not supposed to be—Ukraine in the 4th century BCE, or the Mississippi floodplain, pre-Columbus—they call them mega-sites to avoid having to acknowledge that they are cities. Unless, of course, they fit the looked-for profile of sovereignty and hierarchy.

Much of the evidence the Davids present is from the Neolithic through the early Bronze Age, from about 10,000 to about 2,000 BCE, which is thought to take in the period when humans were first settling down to farm, then establish empires and war with each other. They remind us that this is still accounts for the majority of organized human history. In other words, the period that follows, from ancient Egypt, Rome, and China through today’s State-bound, neoliberal order, which we were taught is the only part of our history that really matters, was both shaped by the previous one and is a departure from it.



There was plenty of injustice, tyranny, and inequality in that earlier time, but also a lot of social and political innovation and experimentation and a more fluid approach to systems of economic production. Nothing was nailed down.

“It’s becoming clear,” Wengrow and Graeber tell us, “that the earliest known evidence of human social life resembles a carnival parade of political forms, far more than it does the drab abstractions of evolutionary theory.” This is a vastly different way of understanding our history than we’ve been taught. Instead of classifying human development by technologies (Bronze Age, Iron Age, Gunpowder Age), they suggest, we should see it through the eyes of people at the time, who experienced it as a diversity of forms of social organization.

How did we get here?

Then how did we get to where we are today, to the rigid, almost fossilized state-capitalist system that’s nailed vast inequalities into place globally and is now taking us on a suicidal sprint into the disaster of global warming? “There is no doubt that something did go terribly wrong with the world,” say the authors. “A very small percentage of the population do control the fates of almost everyone else, and they are doing it in an increasingly disastrous fashion.”

What we want to know, as activists, historians, and just people trying to extricate ourselves from the state-capital

dead-end, is when did it go wrong, and why? Otherwise, what possible lessons can we draw from this book?

The central attack by critics on the left is that after announcing they will tell us what happened, Wengrow and Graeber never do, even after 526 pages of text and nearly 150 more of notes and bibliography. They’ve also been attacked for not stitching class struggle and gender inequality deeply into their account, although they do not ignore these issues and nothing they assert stands in the way of a class or gender analysis of the societies they discuss.

At least one Marxist anthropologist has charged that they ignore how the adoption of agriculture enabled social and economic inequalities to take hold. They don’t. Instead, they point to evidence that there was no dramatic changeover from hunting and gathering to farming, and that stable societies that combined the two existed for millennia.

The Davids are said to have planned a sequel to *The Dawn of Everything* that picks up the story when large, deeply structured empires were starting to organize themselves. There, they would have told us how human society got “stuck” and how it can extricate itself. But they do give us a hint in the present book.

One important characteristic of early states, they argue—like China’s Shang dynasty, which ruled just after the period that Graeber and Wengrow discuss—was that the nerve center of power—the court or the palace—was modeled to some degree on “the organization of the patriarchal household,” and that this framework was closely connected with military might.

Most later kingdoms and empires—Han China, Rome, Aztec Central America—followed the same model. The patriarchal household included slaves and other dependents, with a male at its head whose social responsibility was to discipline and care for its members. This connection “between care and domination,” the authors say, “is utterly critical to the larger question of how we lost the ability freely to recreate ourselves by recreating our relations with one another.”

Prior to the formation of the patriarchal household, they tell us, humans enjoyed three basic freedoms that kept their social formations dynamic: “the freedom to move away or relocate from one’s surroundings, the freedom to ignore or disobey commands issued by others, and the freedom to shape entirely new social realities, or shift back and forth between them.”

Once rigid household formations appeared, and states

began to adopt this model, their subordinate occupants were stymied. New forms of social organization would be planned and implemented from the top, not through some sort of consensus of the broader group.

This is an important observation, but the Davids don't tell us why it had to happen (mightn't the development of agriculture have played a part?) and, once it did, why it was so successful. Why did the patriarchal household sweep away so many other models of human organization in places where it didn't develop organically? They leave the point hanging.

And so, they lead us back to a place they were supposed to be taking us away from: Rousseau's discourse on inequality. The Neolithic may not have been the Garden of Eden, but in their telling the patriarchal household certainly looks like the forbidden fruit, and the rest of human history as a fall from grace.

Arguably, finding a way out of our present dilemma is not what Wengrow and Graeber set out to do. In a recent interview, Wengrow explained their intention. "We wanted to give people a flavor of the incredible discoveries that have been made in recent decades about the sheer diversity of hu-

man life pre-agriculture." There was no fall from Edenic grace when small, egalitarian bands of hunter-gatherers roamed the Earth. The authors make a strong case for this conclusion.

They leave us with a panorama of a world that's not as far in the past as we thought, that was bloody and peaceful, cooperative and warlike, settling down and getting on the move, hierarchical and non-hierarchical, often at roughly the same time: where one model definitely did not fit all. *The Dawn of Everything* already has plenty of critics, but I suspect they will have a very difficult time putting that world back in the box.

Our next step is to take a closer look at what came next: at the persistence of Indigenous cultures, at the efforts to rediscover their practices, and to reclaim the three freedoms that Wengrow and Graeber spell out. We may not have a lot of time left, so we'd better get busy.

Eric Laursen is an independent journalist and activist and the author, most recently, of *The Operating System: An Anarchist Theory of the Modern State* (AK Press, 2021).

Impact of New Wave Science Fiction a radical re-evaluation

**Dangerous Visions and New Worlds:
Radical Science Fiction, 1950-1985**

Edited by Andrew Nette and Ian McIntyre

PM Press, 2021

RICH DANA

In the last several years, Science Fiction, or SF as it is known among fans of the literary genre, has been the subject of several excellent critiques.

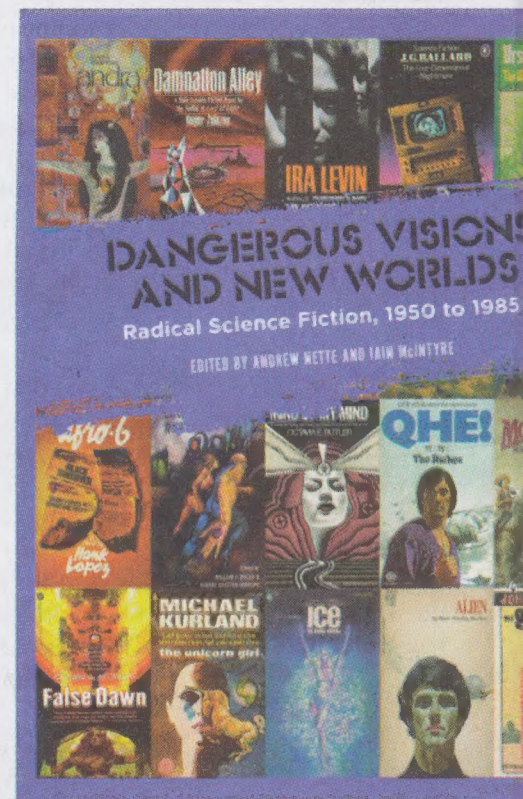
In 2018, Alec Nevalla-Lee's *As-tounding: John W. Campbell, Isaac Asimov, Robert A. Heinlein, L. Ron Hubbard, and the Golden Age of Science Fiction* presented an in-depth analysis of the cultural impact of pulp magazines and the purveyors of the genre's myth of "the competent man."

Last year, *Representations of Political Resistance and Emancipation in Science Fiction*, edited by Judith Grant and Sean Parson, brought together essays by historians and social theorists examining the speculative politics of SF.

The latest entry is a new release

from PM Press, *Dangerous Visions and New Worlds*, in which editors Andrew Nette and Ian McIntyre take a deep-dive into the highly influential and equally underappreciated works of the SF New Wave, whose more famous members included Ursula K Le Guin, Octavia Butler, William Burroughs, Joanna Russ, Samuel R. Delaney, J.G. Ballard, and Philip K. Dick.

The book's title is drawn from Harlan Ellison's anthology *Dangerous Visions* and the UK SF magazine, *New Worlds*, edited in its heyday by Michael Moorcock. The subtitle of the book references the years 1950-1985, which in SF are the period between the decline of the so-called Golden Age and the rise of the Cyberpunk era. The book focuses primarily on the period from the late 1950s to the early 1970s known as "the long sixties." During this period of worldwide cultural upheaval, art, film, literature, and science were all rocked from their foundations. Science fiction (or speculative fiction as its more literary purveyors



sometimes describe it) played a significant role as a testbed for exploring potential political scenarios while testing the boundaries of cultural norms.

The SF New Wave of the long sixties was influenced by the Beats' literary experiments, the Situationists' tactics, and psychedelia's aesthetics. In turn, it continues to influence both popular culture and fine art to the present day. In the introduction, the editors write:

"The impact of New Wave science fiction has, in turn, extended long beyond the heyday of the 1960s and 1970s. Although an explicit and heavy focus on technology returned with cyberpunk in the 1980s, the literary, thematic, and stylistic challenges and innovations presented in the preceding period were largely absorbed and refined rather than removed and rejected. While broader society has significantly changed and moral attitudes shifted, many of the social issues addressed by New Wave authors either remain or have been intensified, giving this body of work continued relevance."

The book is visually stunning and graphically rich. In the introduction, the editors point to the changes in publishing that brought about the decline of pulp magazines and the rise of the paperback novel. The role that paperback cover art played during this period cannot be overstated, and the plethora of illustrations are a joy to experience.

From classic 1950s commercial illustration to full-on psychedelia, Italian Futurist-inspired abstractions to medieval heraldry, the cover artists of the New Wave era drew readers to the revolving wire bookracks at newspaper stands across the world. The selections are excellent, and the full-color reproductions are good. They are so good that if I have one criticism of the book, it is that there isn't an essay dedicated to the cover artists, without whom many paperback masterpieces would have never caught the eye of the novice reader.

For the SF fan, the scholar, or the casual reader, the relatively short and very entertaining essays in the book cover all the bases and introduce most of the significant players of the era. Butler, Moorcock, PKD, Delaney, and Le Guin are featured prominently, but so are less mainstream talents like R.A. Lafferty, Judith Merrill, Hank Lopez, and the Struatsky brothers.

Race and gender, nuclear holocaust and environmental catastrophe, pop culture and technology, sex, drugs, and rock and roll all receive thoughtful discussion. Among the highlights for me were Cameron Ashley's essay "The Fu-

ture Is Going To Be Boring," or J.G. Ballard, "Speculative Fuckbooks: The Brief Life of Essex House" by Rebecca Baumann, and Ian McIntyres unexpected "Doomwatchers: Calamity and Catastrophe in UK Television Novelizations."

The editors note that while some of the writers of the New Wave "...took part in public demonstrations and political action, most opted to undertake activism and sedition via literary expression. In keeping with the anti-authoritarianism of the counterculture, visions for real-world reform and revolution were either fuzzy or aligned most strongly with anarchism and radical forms of feminism."

No one in the movement was more closely aligned with anarchist thought than Judith Merrill. Kat Clay does an excellent job of introducing readers to this underappreciated writer and anthologist in her entry, "On Earth the Air Is Free: The Feminist Science Fiction of Judith Merrill."

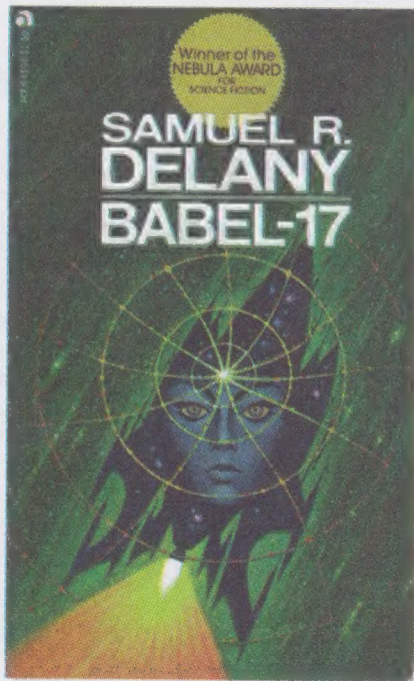
On a personal level, I'm grateful for the inclusion of Mike Stax's essay on Mick Farren, the iconoclastic British

prankster, gonzo journalist, SF writer, and frontman of the protopunk band the Deviants. In the mid-1980s, I became friends with Mick during his time in New York, and later, when I started OBSOLETE! Magazine, Mick was OBSOLETE!'s most consistent contributor.

His last SF short story "What is your problem, Agent X9?" appeared in my magazine shortly before he died (on-stage, performing with the Deviants.) Stax does an excellent job of placing Farren in the historical context of the New Wave. Farren's collaborative nature and lack of mainstream success could lead some to mistake Mick for a dilettante.

But one only needs to read Farren's autobiography, *Give the Anarchist a Cigarette*, to understand that, more than anyone else, he was a quintessential chronicler of this brief, but essential moment, when art, literature, politics, and technology slammed together in a high-speed freeway pile-up, and post-modern popular culture rose from the wreckage.

Rich Dana, aka Ricardo Obsolete, is a writer, artist, and independent publisher. His most recent book, *Cheap Copies! The Obsolete Press guide to DIY Mimeography, Hectography and Spirit Duplication* examines the role of analog copy machines in the rise of the Avant-Garde and Radical Underground. Available at obsolete-press.com



Against Revolutionary Cynicism for Anarchist Consciousness

SIMOUN MAGSALIN

If you took the most ardent revolutionary, vested him with absolute power, within a year he would be worse than the Tsar.

—Mikhail Bakunin

Modern fiction is replete with stories of revolt and failure. The setting might be a brutal dictatorship, maybe it is a medieval fantasy or a cyberpunk dystopia, but the ending is similar. The usual tropes are presented: violence of policing, spy agencies and brutal military forces, all of whom perpetrate torture, disappearances and murders.

Opposing the brutal dictatorship in these stories are the plucky rebel heroes. The specifics are not important. There is a great battle that becomes a revolution and the dictatorship is overthrown. But after the ashes clear, all is not well.

The hated dictator is gone, but the institutions they built up are kept in place. The heroes won the revolution and change has arrived, but the new order feels disturbingly similar to the old one, sometimes worse. The tyrant's stick is replaced by the people's stick—to borrow a phrase from Bakunin.

The online wiki, TV Tropes, calls this "Full-Circle Revolution." We can see this in texts such as *The Hunger Games*, *Dragon Age*, *Far Cry 4*, and even in *A Song of Ice and Fire*.

This perspective is promoted as sadly realistic and inevitable. The rebel heroes might have been sincere, but later are corrupted by power. The revolutionary leaders might have turned out to be no different from the dictators they replaced. Or, perhaps there were cynical bastards behind the scenes working to help the heroes succeed and then take charge after the victory.

The message that we should expect societal change to generally lead to be-



A.R. Penck, "Forests of Symbols," 1983

trayal and a situation worse than the previous one can be characterized as revolutionary cynicism. It is a profoundly cynical view of the potential of individual human beings and social solidarity. It upholds the argument that there is no realistic alternative to the established order, that fighting for a better society is basically futile. In this way, revolutionary cynicism is profoundly liberal in how it upholds the status quo in favor of only gradual change.

As with all narratives, revolutionary cynicism is rooted in some reality and lived experiences. The English popular Revolution which began in 1642 was followed by Cromwell's dictatorship. The 1789 French Revolution ended in the Napoleonic Empire.

The Russian Revolution of 1917 also started as a popular insurgency but was taken over by the vanguardist Bolshevik party. Lenin and the Bolsheviks argued that one-man rule with "unquestioning obedience to the will of a single person, the Soviet leader," was compatible with the workers democracy.

If top-down rule and centralized decree was compatible with democracy as

Lenin understood it, then various demonstrations of the police function of the Bolshevik state were similarly justified. And indeed, the Bolshevik consolidation of power led to a more centralized and systematically brutal domination over individuals and groups than the Tsarist regime was ever able to accomplish.

What is consistently misunderstood or misrepresented by authoritarians is precisely the problem of authority. The construction of authority through statist means, like centralization and hierarchies, concentrates power and agency in that authority rather than enabling the autonomy of those not part of the elite. To confuse representatives or the State with those they claim to represent is an error that justifies the empowerment of representatives and the State, and the disempowerment of the rest of the people.

Among socialists and anarchists, there is also often talk of betrayal of the revolution, where it became authoritarian rather than liberatory, as in England, France, Russia, China or Vietnam. There is substantial truth in the criti-

cisms and charges of betrayal of these revolutions. Vanguardist factions overwhelmed the truly revolutionary actors, and new authoritarian powers gained ascendancy.

The authoritarian leftist conception of revolution has been that revolutionary change is impossible without authority and dictatorship, which are needed to defeat forces of counter-revolution. This is justified as revolutionary realism, the other side of the coin of revolutionary cynicism.

Anarchists should reject both of these conclusions while recognizing there were situations that occurred in the past which might have given people reason to believe in their validity. It is important to ask why these narratives exist. Why is it that some revolutions have resulted in authoritarianism and dictatorship? To this complex query



there are a plurality of answers.

One of the reasons is the lack of discussion and debate about the dangers of hierarchy and concentrated power. Perhaps promoting deeper discussions might help develop an anarchist consciousness that enables revolutionary optimism to counter cynicism/realism.

Libertarian consciousness is based on the understanding that the betrayals of previous revolutionary movements are due precisely to hierarchy and concentrated power.

Revolutionary optimism flows from this analysis, the idea that things not only could have turned out differently, but that, going forward, better outcomes can be achieved. While there are no

Drawing New Maps to the Future

Parallels exist between the movement of bodies globally in the search for freedom and belonging, and the migratory nature of Black life within the borders of the U.S.

The Nation on No Map: Black Anarchism and Abolition

William C. Anderson, Saidiya Hartman (Foreword), Lorenzo Kom'boa Ervin (Afterword)

AK Press 2021

MEGAN DOUGLASS

As a Black diasporic female academic and activist, it isn't so easy to encounter the intersectionality of the struggles I encounter reflected in many academic or anarchist discussions.

Often, writings by both Black and white authors jump straight into a collaborative vision of the future without some attendance to the challenges of such transitions that remain rooted in the divisions around color, gender, class, and state-based identity that are upheld by a casual and omnipresent neo-liberal ideology.

There is also a tendency to mythologize a straight line from the oppression faced by Black people across the globe, to an automatic refusal on behalf of Black people that there is any benefit or boon to revanchist capitalism or reformist politics.

However, just as with any group,

Blackness is not monolithic, and the power of white supremacist and colonized ideology to infect even those who consider themselves most radical is an ever-present and well documented reality. It is not an understanding that is often spoken of in public, but it is one which may be whispered in hushed tones in movement spaces, and that accompanies fears about "dividing Black people" if mentioned too loudly.

But it is an understanding that we must begin to confront if any of us truly hope for a future that doesn't fold back in upon its treacherous past. Truly then, any serious examination of a practical anarchism that doesn't romanticize history or the present must include some treatment of how it is that all groups, even Black groups, organize both through and past the violent essentialism of racialized,

Continued on next page

blueprints for a free society, anarchist consciousness enables us to move past authoritarians' dead-end realism to experiment with creating viable and free ways of revolutionizing life.

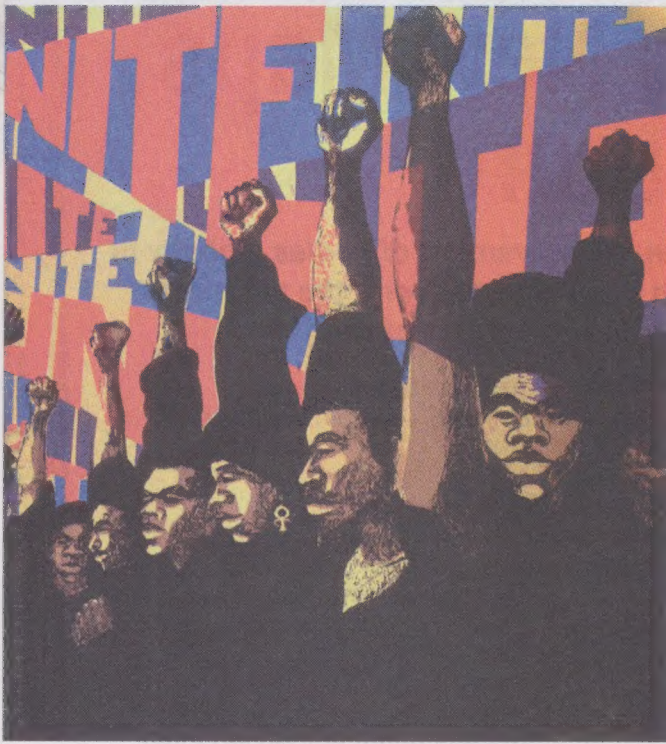
Where do we go from here?

As anarchists conscious of the problem of authority, we are not like the Marxists who conclude that the solution is to preach the gospel of Saint Marx to the masses. We are aware of the already existing potentialities for an anarchist life, such as seen in the mutualistic tendencies present in cultures or

communities dealing with problems for generations without the State.

It is important to nurture these potentialities into intentional self-consciousness. People's awareness of their own autonomy can help counter cynicism and false realism.

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misogynistic, and anti-immigrant narratives and practices which have produced the economic, social, and societal outcomes which continue to harm and terrorize Black people, women, and those labeled foreigners.

Anderson's book foregrounds this perspective as foundational to liberatory work, and it's long overdue.

Serving almost as an update to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, a writing which itself remains relevant today as the term Decolonization enters buzzword status, *The Nation on No Map* functions much like a primer for Black anarchism.

Anderson does an excellent job of centering the need for historical truth-telling as a way to expose oft-ignored fallacies within Black organizing, bridge connections between historical Black activism and the frequently unnamed presence of anarchist ideology in Black movement spaces, and highlight the need to refresh the goals of Black coalition building between diasporic groups and across anarchist spaces.

One of Anderson's most compelling arguments as he advocates for an active and inclusive Black anarchist tradition is his definition of Black existence as being inherently anti-State

given that it is designed to be an instrument of their subjugation.

Anderson provides a critical outline for the ways in which notions of citizenship, who belongs within and outside of Western borders, and who deserves to have a seat at the decision-making table are inherently linked to the enduring traumas of Black and Brown rejection, disunity, displacement, and danger.

He notes, "To be a citizen has meant to be white and like whiteness, citizenship itself is an invention that is of no use to us here. It has done much more harm than good. Anything that affords some people more rights

than others based on borders, race, or class should be abolished. It has no redeeming quality for Black people and fighting to be recognized by or within it means seeking to be embraced by something that has our rejection, if not extermination, built into its very definition."

In this way, by linking the experiences of those who are minoritized, marginalized, and commodified through State sanctioned dogma, Anderson is able to highlight the parallels that exist between the movement of bodies globally in the search for freedom and belonging, and the migratory nature of Black life within the borders of the U.S. as whole communities of people are time and again pushed out or rendered invisible through gentrification, incarceration, and violent forced assimilation.

In addition to this important work of decentering nationality as the prime source for liberation, Anderson's work also provides an intentionally inclusive review of Black and Brown authors who have for years thought deeply about liberatory practices like those espoused in anarchism, or what Anderson at times deems, intercommunalism.

These author/activists help him

paint a picture which firmly centers Black activism within the sphere of anarchism while underscoring the very issues which necessitate a Black anarchist space that must reside outside of, even if alongside, traditionally white led anarchist milieus.

Furthermore, for anyone attempting to understand how State based co-optation of movements for change leads to the manipulation, absorption, and/or dilution of real and potential threats to its existence, Anderson's book is must-read.

With frightening numbers of Black people dying due to Covid-19 (among other viruses that have long held reigns of terror over Black lives), the ever-increasing absurdity of the wealth chasms between those doing the work and those manipulating the workers, global climate disasters on the rise, trade wars and military wars constantly threatening our safety, and the ever expanding non-profit industrial complex, the time is ripe for unabashed and unafraid examination of our commonly held yet not so popularly challenged beliefs.

There is a real need for serious and transparent scholarship about the kinds of ideologies, revisionist histories, and bloated narratives that are holding us back and those that advance true interconnectedness as we attempt to survive and so do with everyone's humanity in mind. Anderson's book does just this, without pretension, without mincing words, and without apology.

Megan Douglass is the Digital Director at For Our Future MI, the Managing Editor of the Detroit-based social justice magazine *Riverwise*, an applied anthropologist pursuing her Ph.D. at Wayne State University with a focus on decolonized methodologies and sustainable movement building, a mother, and a lifelong advocate for the human rights of all minoritized peoples. Her favorite sayings are "if you aren't angry, you aren't paying attention," and "another future isn't just possible, it's already happening."

Stories and Stories and Stories of Womanhood

Pandora is out of the box

All of Me: Stories of Love, Anger, and the
Female Body

Ed. Dani Burlison

PM Press, 2019

MARIEKE BIVAR

In this collection, women's bodies are discussed as sites of healing, burnout, grief, joy, transformation, and growth. The essays, interviews, and other writing vary immensely in tone and style, and there is a sense that this is a place where women's anger is being expressed freely, however the contributors choose to do so.

As Michelle Cruz Gonzalez puts it in her piece, "Grab My Pussy I Dare You," "You're right, we don't have proof, no DNA evidence, no fingerprints to lift from our skin, no audio, no video, just stories and stories and stories that we will tell that we will keep telling, because we are full, and you have lifted the lid. Pandora is out of the box."

As women, we often become so focused on the source of the violence, that we forget to see ourselves and other women as full, diverse, complex humans. Instead, we may unwittingly fall into a victim blaming mentality, trying to figure out what we can do to avoid our perpetrator's violence or lessen its impacts.

In her interview about Arming Sisters, a non-profit that uses self-defense as a tool of healing for women in Indigenous communities, contributor Patty Stonefish expresses her worry that sometimes the way we view women's self defense as a method of prevention can be problematic. To her, "martial arts... can be utilized as a tool of healing and should be. . . [because] this idea of prevention. . . just perpetuates the whole rape culture cycle[.] It puts the respon-

sibility back on us and continues this whole victim-blaming cycle."

For Stonefish, practicing martial arts is something women can do to process the trauma of living under misogyny, not a tool to fight that tsunami of violence that they face day to day.

Some contributors are interested in examining the ways in which our coping strategies in the wake of violence against women can be problematic, exclusive, and racist. Much like Patty Stonefish's insight into the victim-blaming mentality behind prevention strategies, in "Notes on Racism, Trauma and Self Care from a Woman of Color," Lorelle Saxena argues against falling into a mindset in which we measure a woman's strength by expecting "an overfilled schedule and chronic fatigue."

In fact, she feels that "we're a little suspicious of anyone well rested and grounded" and laments that "we grant an implied badge of honor to women who are tired and stressed." Her hope is that our society can begin to "[grant] that badge of honor, instead, [when women prioritize] wellness and quality of life," as well as unburden Black women from the added stress of unacknowledged PTSD from living in a racist world.

A variety of experiences contribute to our understanding of what it is to be a woman in this world, and thankfully the experiences of trans women and non-binary people are also included and welcome in this collection.

Laurie Penny's excellent article,



Lenora Carrington, *Controlling the Dark*

"How to be a Genderqueer Feminist," on identifying with women and feminism as a genderqueer person, is a perfect addition and sums up the ways in which their trans identity includes feminism: "Saying that gender is fluid doesn't mean that we have to ignore sexism. In fact, it's the opposite. . . . Feminists and the LGBT community have this in common: we're all gender traitors. We have broken the rules of good behavior assigned to us at birth, and we have all suffered for it... I don't want to see a world without gender. I want to see a world where gender is not oppressive or enforced, where there are as many ways to express and perform and relate to your own identity as there are people on Earth."

Reading these pieces of writing and these interviews is painful. Not because they are exceptional, but because they are a familiar reminder that this world holds such hatred for women, like the stories of violence women carry around with them as warnings, as protection, and as knowledge they can't unknow.

For trans women, this knowledge can come in one swift, brutal slap in the face as the world begins to see and react to their womanhood. Ariel Erskine's experience of sexual and sexist violence since affirming her gender has been a crash course in being made to feel unsafe in public places. The first time a man sexually harassed her she "didn't know how to handle [the] situation as a target."

She was experiencing what all

women and girls learn in an embodied way at some point in their lives: that violence is part of being a woman. What Ariel experienced as an adult, some experience for the first time as children or teens. As Lydia Yuknavitch puts it in her piece, "Explicit Violence," no matter when it happens, women learn to accept that "you can be a girl and a woman and travel through male violence like it's part of what living a life means."

In January 2021, Quebec imposed the first of three Covid curfews, an extra tool of isolation during what are already long and difficult winter months. In the spring, the melt uncovered a record number of femicides.

When I was a child, I remember listening to the song "Why" by Tracy Chapman and being confused by the line "why is a woman still not safe when she's in her home." It seems so obvious now. This is another embodied knowledge many women and children can't unknow. Being trapped indoors, with the parent or partner who is not safe, is so common and part of how violence against women and children is simply part of a larger culture that hates women.

This hatred is such an intrinsic part of the dominant culture, but it morphs and adapts to target specific categories of women, as we learn with artist Candace Williams in her discussion of her experience of misogynoir, the intersection of sex-

ism and racism, or when we think about transmisogyny, a combination of hating the femininity of trans women and hating their transness. No matter what kind of woman you are, there's a special place for you in the hatred of the dominant culture when it comes to women and women's power.

What every piece in this collection is working towards is making these different experiences visible, connecting them, and collecting them in one place. Although some of the conclusions drawn are less than radical (editor Dani Burlison and contributor Deya both believe strongly in voting, for example), others open doors to radical understandings of our bodies, our genders, and our collective capacity to not just cope with, but celebrate womanhood.

adrienne maree brown shares the idea of "Love as Political Resistance." You can read "Auntie Starhawk's Sex Advice for Troubled Times" for some nuanced writing on sex, joy and trauma. Silvia Federici encourages us to "make connection with past and present" in order to face and challenge the way women continue to be oppressed. And, Melissa Madera has created a forum for women to share their experiences of abortion on her podcast, *The Abortion Diary*, shaking off the shame and stigma many women who have had abortions struggle with in isolation.

All of Me is a small sampling of the "stories and stories and stories" we carry about womanhood, and the contributors have carved out more space for us to continue speaking, writing, podcasting, and expressing our love and anger and supporting each other.

Marieke Bivar is slogging through another endless pandemic winter and keeping the fire going with writing, solidarity, rest, witchery, and precious love and care from her people.



Stashing the Tacky Little Pamphlets

As more of our daily geography is occupied by a coercive media ecology, a tool to regain some ground

JASON RODGERS

You might assume that a Tacky Little Pamphlet (TLP) is just another name for a mini-zine. In a way, you are correct. It usually refers to a format of a single sheet folded into eight sections, cut up the middle, and folded up like origami to form a miniature zine. However, the term includes additional meaning that expands far beyond into a form of tactical media or strategic prank.

Olchar Lindsann of Monocle Lash Anti-Press thought the origin of the term was from either zinesters "Blaster" Al Ackerman or The Haddock. We'd lost Blaster a few years back, so I wrote to The Haddock, one of the great mail artists of all time. He's been active since at least the 1970s and will still happily send an envelope full of lunacy out to you.

A lot of the material he sends is like bad psychedelics or erotica for Lovecraftian Great Old Ones. The Haddock replied, "I called my zines Tacky Little Pamphlets, so Ack just assumed I coined the term. Actually, I stole the term from Frank Zappa. Listen to the lyrics of his song, 'Dirty Love'."

The song from Zappa's 1973 LP "Over-Nite Sensation" contains the line, "Give me your dirty love, like some tacky little pamphlet in your daddy's bottom drawer." This is a reference to pre-internet pornographic magazines, stashed away for surreptitious viewing.

But rather than an issue of *Playboy* or *Hustler*, the lyrics always made me think of so-called Tijuana Bibles, palm-sized comics popular between the 1920 and early 1960s featuring

depictions of mainstream comic characters or Hollywood stars engaging in lewd sexual acts. Their production value was low grade and tacky, a form of underground publishing that was entirely commercial. They are collectibles today.

The little porno mags had some influence on the underground comix scene of the 1960s such as material drawn by cartoonist R. Crumb, as well as when Paul Krassner published a centerfold poster of Disney characters having an orgy and doing drugs in a 1967 issue of *The Realist*. In a way, the Tijuana Bibles were a form of *detournement*, taking an established element of culture and mutilating it to change its meaning, but they were not done with any political reason; just purely for titillation of viewer.

The TLP is itself a sort of *detournement*. This is what separates it from a minizine. "Blaster" Al Ackerman writes:

"[W]e can say that the ambiance of the true, classic TLP has got to combine the redolent qualities of something smudged produced in a closet by Yig-Soggoth and Pete, Minions of the Archimandrite, combined with the sort of tract you are likely to be handed on the street corner by a personage who not only appears to be wearing multiple layers of clothing, all carefully unmatched, topped with a wool stocking cap with eyeholes, but who also proceeds to say things along the lines of 'Sniff, sniff, somebody in this timeline has brown eyes.'"

This is all a strange way of saying it *detourns* the format of a standard Bible tract or medical pamphlets that you would find in a doctor's office. This format was for a purpose, as one of the major forms of distribution was to drop these off at locations such as waiting rooms.

Ackerman gave an example of one of these titles, "It's called *Friends*," he said. But what "each issue of this rather schlocky, rather sketchily xeroxed TLP dishes up are hospital horror stories; accounts of patients being accidentally maimed, cut, scalded, smothered, or otherwise harmed—always by accident and always by candy strippers, gray ladies, etc." They were left in hospital waiting rooms along with issues of *Drunkard RNs*. This is a form of tactical media, which exploits specific spaces.

There is a certain similarity between the tactical form of the TLP and the old Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) use of the "silent agitator," small stickers that Wobblies would put up in their workplace. For instance, one that included an image of a wooden shoe with a quote from IWW leader Bill Haywood: "Sabotage means to push back, pull out or break off the fangs of Capitalism." You can find this and other reproductions of such stickers in Franklin Rosemont's *Joe Hill: The IWW & the Making of a Revolutionary Working Class Counterculture*. The heyday of these silent agitators was the early 20th century when Wobblies still had clout. For the IWW this was a grassroots tactic to boost morale between workers in the



struggle, encourage them to resist, and intimidate the boss.

But for a TLP what is the goal? It is clearly a sort of sabotage to the smooth workings of consensus reality. It is certainly something stranger than union agitation. It could be considered a challenge to the dominant paradigm, but in a much more intense way than how that is usually done.

The dominant form of literature used by zinester Ackerman finds its closest parallel in Sufi learning tales. These strange little stories are designed to not entirely make sense, but to seed important ideas in the reader's or listener's mind. These ideas would then bloom.

Ackerman's stories used a combination of tall tales, pulp science fiction, and dirty jokes to convey knowledge and increase perception. Ackerman's method may have resulted from a meeting with Idrie Shah, Sufi master and author of *Tales of the Dervishes*. Although Ackerman described him as being shifty eyed and chain smoking, he seemed to think highly of him.

The TLP works as an excellent form of tactical media. As more of our daily geography is occupied by a coercive media ecology, it is a tool to regain some ground. Maybe, occasionally, it even works as a wrench in the gears of the social factory.

Jason Rodgers' articles appear frequently in these pages, most recently in "This World We Must Leave" (FE #410, Fall, 2021). Her latest book is *Invisible Generation: Rants, Polemics, and Critical Theory Against the Planetary Work Machine*, a review of which appears in this issue.

Her communiques, "Affinity and the Passional Conspiracy" and "Command Lines, Control Lines," are available by mail: PO Box 701, Cobleskill NY 12043.

Call for Submissions for Fall 2022
(This issue will follow Spring 2022)

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Disability and Creativity

Revolt against the categories and stereotypes that kill the spirit

There Plant Eyes: A Personal and Cultural History of Blindness

M. Leona Godin

Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group
2021

More Than Meets the Eye: What Blindness Brings to Art

Georgina Kleege

Oxford University Press 2018

SYLVIE KASHDAN

"I want freedom, the right to self expression, everybody's right to beautiful, radiant things."

—Emma Goldman

We all deserve what Emma Goldman desired, to be free, to have possibilities for self-expression and the joy of sharing the world with others who respect and love us. We all have dreams, goals, interests, and some sort of sense of humor and desires to relate to others. Social creativity is a gift we all have in one way or another. It must be shared to thrive.

But all too often in today's society people with disabilities are narrowly evaluated in terms of what and how much they can contribute to production and consumption. They are told that their best hope of acceptance is to strive toward conformity in the workaday world of the present oppression and repression.

It is certainly true that many people with physical and mental impairments experienced prejudice and persecution in pre-modern societies, before the development of manufacturing processes and the factory system in the 1700s. They were often attacked as the embodiment of evil, as witches, or even the Devil. Nevertheless, many people with a variety of impairments were integrated into those societies and contributed, to one extent or another, to family and village



economies.

Since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, those unable to conform to the needs of the machines and employers have been labeled deviant or inadequate and excluded from standardized jobs, even though they might not have been considered inadequate under earlier ways of organizing work.

Today, people with a wide variety of physical and mental differences are often stereotyped and stigmatized as lacking intelligence and deserving only pity, or as superhuman marvels, geniuses in some area, but not human beings other people can relate to as unique individuals.

One of the most familiar examples is Helen Keller, the deaf-blind woman who became famous for overcoming her handicap with the help of her so-called miracle worker teacher, Anne Sullivan. Keller participated in the Chautauqua lecture circuit and the vaudeville circuit; she joined the American Socialist Party and advocated for the cause; she opposed World War I; she supported the Industrial Workers of The World (IWW) and advocated for civil liberties, the rights of women, workers, and people of color.

She was considered remarkable for developing the capacity to communicate with others (something taken for granted among so-called

normal people). But her stances on social and political issues were not generally considered important or taken seriously as expressions of her own ideas outside disability rights circles. As she wrote in 1908:

"It seems to me difficult to imagine anything more fatuous and stupid than their comments on anything I say touching public affairs. So long as I confine my activities to social service and the blind, they compliment me extravagantly, calling me the 'archpriestess of the sightless,' 'wonder woman,'

and 'modern miracle,' but when it comes to a discussion of a burning social or political issue, especially if I happen to be, as I so often am, on the unpopular side, the tone changes completely. They are grieved because they imagine I am in the hands of unscrupulous persons who take advantage of my afflictions to make me a mouthpiece for their own ideas."

Keller also found that very few people considered her ideas about beauty, art, or creativity to be authentic or important because she couldn't see or hear. She noted, "Critics delight to tell us what we cannot do. They assume that blindness and deafness sever us completely from the things which the seeing and the hearing enjoy, and hence they assert we have no moral right to talk about beauty, the skies, mountains, the song of birds, and colors. They declare that the very sensations we have from the sense of touch are 'vicarious,' as though our friends felt the sun for us. They deny *a priori* what they have not seen and I have felt." Her other senses and her capacity to feel emotions and empathize with others didn't count for much either.

In recent decades, people in the disability rights movement have worked hard to familiarize the general public with the idea that those with disabilities can be ordinary participants in the society, as workaday producers and consumers like everyone else. A number of books, theater works, films, and TV shows describing the lives of people with various disabilities have become popular. They help to develop sympathy for those fighting for a world that is significantly more accessible for all. Quite a few have dealt with blindness, among the most feared physical afflictions in the United States and most other parts of the world.

For example, in her 2021 book *There Plant Eyes*, M. Leona Godin, presents a well-researched cultural history of blindness by referencing the writings about and by various emblematic blind people from Homer to Stevie Wonder and beyond. Very many of the stories are about people who are blind serving the rich and powerful, educating kings and savors, who may or may not go on to be inspirational leaders themselves.

Godin's book explores what blindness signifies in modern cultures, how we conceptualize abilities and disabilities—what it means to be blind in the social context of a society which values vision while neglecting to fully recognize the contributions of the other senses. She explores the reality that all too often sight is equated with knowledge and understanding, while blindness is associated with ignorance and stupidity. So, it seems unremarkable that "...the rhetorical use of the word 'blind' is bandied about so frequently—blind faith, blind love, blind rage, blind drunk, etc.—that one does not often pause to consider the effect the slur may have on actual blind people."

The book also describes Godin's experiences as a person with vision impairment, the social and environmental barriers to her full participation in certain areas, and the work-

arounds and remedies she has found. She appropriately cautions, however, that there is no universal consciousness or politics that emerges from being classified in this disability category.

In her 2018 book *More Than Meets the Eye: What Blindness Brings to Art*, Georgina Kleege presents another element of experience. Growing up with a visual impairment in a family with two parents who were successful modern artists, she regularly visited galleries and the homes of other artists, where she looked closely at and touched many of their works.

Kleege also frequently heard and began participating in long discussions about visual as well as other forms of art that

made her aware of several aspect she would have missed if not called to her attention. This helped her to become familiar and comfortable with discourse on art culture and creativity.

Kleege covers some of the same history and philosophy dealt with by

Godin, but with more emphasis on exploring the possibilities for discussion and creativity for people with different capacities for knowing the world. She writes:

"the history of speculation on visual art, and human vision in general, is haunted by ideas about blindness...when theorists imagine a spectrum of human visual experience they place the blind man at one end, standing for the complete absence of vision. The other endpoint is occupied not by a person with merely average vision, but by the artist, someone understood to possess extra special vision. The artist is depicted as a sort of superman of seeing, able to see more or better than ordinary people, and to show, not just what he sees but also how best to look at it."

But Kleege asserts that this elitist and exclusionary way of understanding artistic expression is contradicted by the fact that we are all living in a world where visual aspects of the environment are constantly being referenced verbally and in writing, so that "the average totally, congenitally blind person knows infinitely more about what it means to be sighted than the average sighted person knows about what it means to be blind."

As a person with a visual impairment who has a deep appreciation for art and creativity, Kleege is particularly interested in exploring possibilities for empowering more blind people to enjoy, study and create art alongside and in collaboration with sighted people with similar interests. The final chapters of her book have many examples of how such collaborative interconnections can be developed, in and out of museums, art galleries, the theater, movies, and on the street. In the last chapter, Kleege particularly explores "the complex three-way communication that takes place between the artist, the art work, and the beholder."

From an anarchist perspective this view of art can be a weapon to challenge the exploitative and alienating dimensions of modern society, including work and consumption, and the political relations of power and authority they rein-

The focus needs to change to emphasize the positive value of social interdependence for everyone—regardless of perceived abilities or disabilities.

force. This includes redefining human needs, and the recognition that standards of inclusion in modern society cheat us all out of the ability to share and support each other.

Some anarchist and anti-authoritarian activists with disabilities have begun to challenge the focus on wage labor and consumerism in order to break out of the traditional limits of disability demands and call for more social and personal fulfillment for everyone.

For example, in several articles the independent scholar-activist in the field of Disability Studies, and anarchist, Steven Graby argues that wage labor cannot be liberating for people with disabilities any more than for non-disabled people because even under the best of circumstances it denies the self-determination of workers who are effectively forced to sell their time to employers. This relationship is necessarily authoritarian and disciplinary in structure. And, consumerism is also alienating and manipulated to sustain the market, not to satisfy people's needs.

Graby explicitly rejects the work ethic and refuses to equate human value with labor-power.

This leads him to emphasize the importance of everyone

learning how to integrate people with different strengths and weaknesses into mutual aid projects that embody sincere social relationships of care, as a rejection of the marketplace.

The focus needs to change to emphasize the positive value of social interdependence for everyone—regardless of perceived abilities or disabilities.

This means concentrating more on prioritizing inclusion of people with disabilities in mutual aid projects as a foundation of our relationship to each other and the natural world. It also means placing greater importance on cultivating the elements of gift economies that already exist. In addition to being important in times of scarcity and plenty, sharing needs to be recognized as a major source of life's pleasures.

Sylvie Kashdan is an anarchist who, among other things, is blind. Her main interests are anarchist social history and current possibilities. At the 2009 Seattle Anarchist Book Fair, she participated, along with two other anarchists with different impairments, in a panel titled "Aging, Disability and Allyship in the Community: Don't leave us behind at the end of the march!"



Man Ray, *Model in Lucien Lelong gown, seated in wheelbarrow*

Surrealist Sabotage and the War on Work
Abigail Susik
Manchester University Press, 2021

MICHAEL DESNIVIC

Surrealism emerged from the brutality of the trenches of the brutal first world war that devastated Europe as an attempt to come to terms with the ruins and a rapidly changing world of new technologies and systems.

With World War I, a generation born near the beginning of the 20th century had reached adulthood. Increasing social and technological changes became more and more prominent and, by extension, both labor and culture became shaped by

Work and the Dreamers Against It

The Surrealist movement's view on what came to be known as work in the 20th Century

everything these constantly-updating machines demanded.

Abigail Susik's book *Surrealist Sabotage and the War on Work* examines the Surrealist movement and its view of what came to be known as *work* under these changed conditions. Marx and Engels contended that the proletariat was the product of bourgeois society as well as its negation. The Surrealist movement was also the product and negation of 20th Century bourgeois society—and, they understood how to effectively undermine it by tackling and struggling against its foundation: work.

That Abigail Susik is an assistant professor of art history at Willamette University will not surprise the reader. Extensive records are carefully examined, researched and analyzed on every page. Susik touches upon the motivations of the unconscious mind of the Surrealist movement itself, the very thing that the Surrealists were so keen on discovering and examining.

The release of Susik's book could not have come at a more fitting time, during the autumn of 2021, when major media outlets were reporting on the so-called Great Resignation along with the growth of innumerable online anti-work communities. The Surrealist movement came into being in 1918, not only during an increasing critique of work by European radicals mirroring the enormous spikes of interest in anti-work perspectives today, but during the global Spanish flu pandemic.

Every new change in a capitalist society not only affects labor, it is based on labor. Thus, any change or reform in capitalist society allowed by the capitalist class is merely a performance to increase its returns on its investments and decrease the hindrances to such returns. As the interests of the working class and the capitalist class are diametrically opposed, each change in the economic system will improve the condition of one at the expense of the other and one will respond to negate the improvement of the other.

It is fascinating to learn that Surrealism's emergence coincided with an increase in work discipline tactics in France that were imported from the Fordist Era in the U.S. which were met by subsequent resistance by workers. Capitalizing on this and influenced not only by Marx, but his son-in-law Paul Lafargue (author of *The Right to Be Lazy*), the Surrealists went beyond union strike actions and insisted on tactics that effectively undermined the process of work (a primary function in a world of "miserablism," as André Breton called it).

Workers at this time used numerous tactics to fight against work that varied in their intensity. "Subversion through compliance" involved following workplace rules to such a meticulous and calculated degree that it compromised productivity. Faking illness, showing up late, work stoppages and cheating the clock were common occurrences.

In their journal *La Révolution surréaliste*, the Surrealists called for mass suicide as a viable tactic to fight work! "Self-inflicted death became an absolutist substitution for the endless toil of the conscription of wage labor," Susik tells us. An "all-too-earnest questionnaire" was included in one issue asking readers "about their opinion of suicide" as a means to combat capitalism, noting recent suicides in French newspapers.

No means to destroy work were too extreme. The aggressive hostility to the world of work by Breton and his comrades never shied away from all applicable tactics to undermine it. The development of Surrealism in Europe coincided with the rebelliousness of the working class of the era, thus producing art and ideas in opposition to capitalism.

The Surrealists, not only being products of their time, were also products of their class. It seemed with all their disdain for work, their privileged positions in life allowed them to avoid doing a great deal of it. The first Surrealists in France, especially Breton and his wife Simone, were from fairly advantaged

backgrounds. There was also an alliance with the Parti communiste français (PCF) that, however, did become uneasy. In their rejection of Stalinism and the mass production apparatus, the surrealists found the PCF to be completely antithetical to their calls for the destruction of work. The Surrealists' anarchist perspectives, desire for sexual liberation and calls for the end of work were aggressively rejected by the Stalinists in both France and Russia. A permanent break between the surrealists and PCF thus resulted in the 1930s.

Further contradictions of the Surrealists are seen when noting their championing of women's empowerment; in practice they overlooked their own male domination. Susik writes, "It is well known that André Breton and the Surrealists venerated working-class women who murdered people in positions of

Faking illness, showing up late, work stoppages and cheating the clock were common occurrences.

power."

Such radical anti-capitalist feminism was not unusual for the Surrealists, but their practice of automatism (seeking images and words from the unconscious mind) was done exclusively by Surrealist women at the typewriter, transcribing like secretaries, the results of the men entering trances.

Here, Susik comes to a brilliant observation. Surrealism (and even psychoanalysis, a heavy influence on it) was a direct product of the growth of early 20th century office culture, with a gendered division of labor. Sexism and miserablism (and the reality of their inseparability) seemed to go unnoticed or at least unremarked by the men of the movement.

While Surrealism was a rebellion against the mass conformity that was coalescing into the rise of fascism in the 1930s, it greatly influenced a generation after it as well. The Chicago Surrealist Group in the 1960s, that also took inspiration from the Industrial Workers of the World, was founded by Franklin Rosemont, Penelope Rosemont, and others after a trip to Paris in 1965 where the Rosemonts met Breton and other Surrealists.

They published *The Rebel Worker* detailing wild adventures and hoping to find other writers and artists seeking to change the world. This led to lucid examinations of revolutionary theory with German-American Marxist philosopher Herbert Marcuse. Susik details the communication between the Rosemonts and Marcuse, and finally with Breton and friends toward the end of his life. They pondered how to create a Surrealist revolution and a world free from alienated labor and repression.

Over a hundred years since their start, both the Surrealists and the world they struggled against live on.

Michael Desnivic is an anarchist writer living in Saint Louis. He enjoys poetry, procrastination and assisting in any way he can to make the modern world of misery, conservatism, work, and hierarchy come to a dramatic conclusion.

The Modern School Movement

Anarchist educational ideas and practices offer many lessons



The NYC Modern School ca. 1911-1912.
Principal Will Durant and pupils.

MICHAEL DUNN

In the wake of the punitive No Child Left Behind and Race to the Top legislation of the Bush and Obama years, education reform has turned one hundred and eighty degrees. Today, many schools are implementing much more noncoercive practices, like restorative justice and culturally sensitive teaching.

These programs aim to make educators more empathetic to students' backgrounds and needs, so they can better mitigate the effects of racism, homophobia, sexism, and poverty in the classroom. Other popular current reforms include project- and inquiry-based activities that make students more active participants in their own learning.

While this approach to teaching might seem new, it actually has antecedents that go back 250 years, to the work of Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi (1746-1827), a Swiss pedagogue and reformer who believed that every individual had the ability to learn and the right to an education. Many of the

principles of modern pedagogy have their roots in his philosophy and practice, including the ideas of student-centered, inquiry-based learning, a focus on the child's interests and needs, cooperation and communication between teacher and parents, and active, rather than passive, learning.

Pestalozzi believed that children should learn by doing and they should be free to pursue their own interests and draw their own conclusions. This was in marked contrast to the typical pedagogy of the day (and how many of us were taught), in which the children learned entirely from books, lecture and rote repetition, often without understanding what they were memorizing.

Pestalozzi's teaching methods were also based on respect for his students' individual personalities and their personal dignity, as well as a strong belief in social justice and personal liberty. He encouraged classroom visits and participation by parents and believed strongly in regular communication with them about their children's progress.

Yet he opposed the concept of report cards, saying, "No child is to compare himself with others." He accepted children from all backgrounds, including those with emotional problems, and even opened a school for hearing impaired children.

His ideas became the basis for the pedagogies of Friedrich Froebel (inventor of kindergarten and Froebel Gifts), Paul Robin (founder of the Prevest Orphanage school in France), Francisco Ferrer (founder of the first Modern Schools in Spain) and many of the left libertarian educators that followed.

Paul Robin was an atheist, a Darwinist, and a member of the International Workingmen's Association. He eventually broke with the Marxists—with their emphasis on engaging in political party building—and sided with

the anarchists—with their emphasis on self-governing workers' organizations.

In 1879, he returned to France, and was appointed head of the school at the Prevest Orphanage. There, he sought to coeducate boys and girls in a noncoercive, secular atmosphere at a time when the rest of French pedagogy was steeped in religious and nationalist dogma. His school was supported by veterans of the 1871 Paris Commune, Louise Michel and Elysée Reclus, as well as Peter Kropotkin and Leo Tolstoy.

Following in Robin's footsteps, Francisco Ferrer (1859-1909) opened his first Modern School (Escuela Moderna) on September 8, 1901, in Barcelona, Spain. His book, *The Origin and Ideals of the Modern School*, argued for co-education, as well as for including the rich and poor.

During Ferrer's days, the Spanish literacy rate was only 50% and all schools were church-regulated. The teachers at the Church-run schools emphasized rote memorization of Catholic dogma, were hostile to any scientific and political thinking that displeased the Church, and often physically brutalized students. In contrast, Modern Schools purged their books of all religion and their curriculum was fully secular. These ideas were so popular that 40 more Modern Schools opened in Barcelona in just a few years, while 80 other schools adopted his textbooks.

Not surprisingly, Ferrer was vilified by both the church and the state. In 1906, when anarchist Mateu Morral threw a bomb at the Spanish king, the authorities arrested Ferrer and shut down his schools. Morral had worked in the library of one of the Modern Schools, but Ferrer had nothing to do with the assassination attempt.

Ferrer was eventually acquitted, but the authorities got another chance in 1909, when mass protests against Span-

Pestalozzi's teaching methods were also based on respect for his students' individual personalities and their personal dignity, as well as a strong belief in social justice and personal liberty.

ish intervention in Morocco grew into a general strike. The state responded with a wave of anti-worker terror and repression known as "The Tragic Week," during which over 600 workers were slaughtered by government forces. State prosecutors again blamed Ferrer, even though he was nowhere near Barcelona at the time. This time they succeeded, convicting him of instigating the riot and executing him later that year.

While in prison, Ferrer wrote the following on his prison wall: "Let no more gods or exploiters be served. Let us learn rather to love each other." When facing the firing squad, he bravely declared, "Aim well, boys. I know this is not your fault. Long live the Modern School!"

Ferrer's execution led to worldwide protests and organizing. Modern Schools began to pop up outside of Spain, inspired by his original Escuela Moderna. After his death, activists created more than 200 Modern Schools in Spain and 20 more in the U.S., one of which continued operating until 1958.

The creators of the American Modern Schools designed them to counter the discipline, formality and regimentation of traditional American schools. Regular working-class people ran the schools for the children of workers. They sought to abolish all forms of authority, including educational, with the goal of creating a society based on free association and free thought.

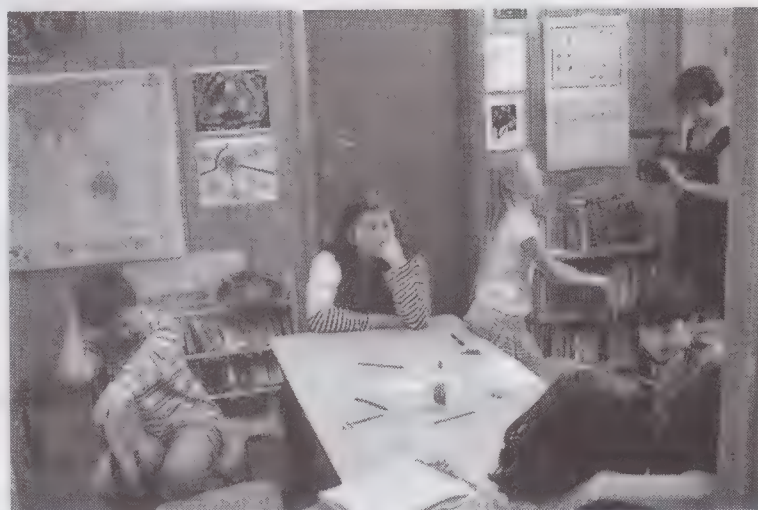
In 1910, anarchists formed the Francisco Ferrer Association (which later became the Modern School Association of North America), to spread Ferrer's teachings and build a network of Modern Schools in the U.S. Charter members included Emma Goldman, Leonard Abbott, and Harry Kelly.

By 1914 Modern Schools were operating in Philadelphia, Detroit, New York, Seattle, Portland, Chicago and Salt Lake City, with more soon to follow in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Boston and Paterson. They taught classes in English, Yiddish, Czech, Italian and Spanish.

While most of the Modern Schools lasted only a few years, the school in Stelton, New Jersey, lasted four decades.

Modern Schools emphasized learning by doing, as well as crafts and reading. They avoided rigid curricula, rote memorization and regimentation, as well as rewards and punishments. Modern School teachers and supporters believed that learning must be free, and felt that children needed to decide for themselves what to learn and how to learn it.

They also believed that learning was a life-long process that never ended. Therefore, parents and other adults were encouraged to participate in the operation of the schools and to attend evening and weekend lectures. Some of the speakers at these lectures included Clarence Darrow, Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, Jack London, Upton Sinclair, and Man Ray. The schools also served as cultural centers for the promotion of revolutionary unionism, free speech, sexual liberation, and



The Teddy McArdle Free School, New Jersey, circa 2008 / photo by Alexander Khost

anti-militarism.

In 1914, the progress of the schools was temporarily interrupted by political violence. After the Colorado National Guard attacked striking miners' families in Ludlow, killing 12 children and two women, a number of anarchists decided to seek revenge on John D. Rockefeller, owner of the mines.

A plot to assassinate Rockefeller was hatched by anarchists associated with the New York Ferrer Center. A bomb exploded prematurely, killing three anarchists. These events led to infiltration of the school and center by undercover cops. Visitors and families stopped coming to the school. As a result, organizers decided to move the school to rural Stelton in 1915, where it operated into the 1940s.

The last Modern School in America was in Lakewood, New Jersey. It operated from 1933 to 1958.

School districts today are struggling to find enough teachers to keep their classrooms open because of low wages, overwhelming workplace demands, and the continuing drive to privatize and homogenize education. This is only exacerbated by the stresses of teaching during a pandemic, in overcrowded, poorly ventilated classrooms, as colleagues and students' family members get sick and die. Today, more than ever, we need a rational, compassionate approach to education, like the Modern Schools provided.

Michael Dunn has been a San Francisco Bay area public school teacher and union organizer for more than 20 years. He writes working class historical fiction and a labor history blog. His first novel, *Anywhere But Schuylkill*, the story of a fifteen-year-old Irish coal miner struggling to keep his siblings alive during a depression, will be out soon. michaeldunnauthor.com/

3 online plays: "EVICTION? Dog's Blood!!," "Ukrainians, Pelicans & the Secret of Patterson Lake," and "Run Nawrocki Run! Escape from Banff Prison"

Norman Nawrocki, 2020-2022

HUBERT GENDRON-BLAIS

Norman Nawrocki is a veteran artiste and activist in the Montreal anarchist and radical communities. He has produced more than 20 theater plays, 14 books, and over 30 music albums as a solo artist or with many bands and collectives since the 1980s such as Rhythm Activism, Bakunin's Bum, Anarchist Writers Bloc, and DaZoque.

How could Norman, who normally travels worldwide with his creations, including his anti-sexist comedy shows, remain inactive because of Covid?

He didn't. Since the beginning of the pandemic, Nawrocki has written, directed and performed three plays: "EVICTION? Dog's Blood!! Nick Zynchuk & Montreal's Red Plateau 1933,"

"Ukrainians, Pelicans & the Secret of Patterson Lake," and "Run Nawrocki Run! Escape from Banff Prison."

As their titles indicate, these three online plays continue with the historical drama genre explored by Nawrocki in his recent creations, the novel *Cazzarola! Anarchy, Romani, Love, Italy* (PM Press, 2013) and the plays, "No Way! No Way! Six Anti-Fascist Women" (2018), and "Women Strike! The Winnipeg General Strike 1919" (2019). This is a genre that the author has come to practice with great finesse, interweaving historical research, well-crafted dramatic intensity and moments of poetry and humor.

But unlike these recent creations which involved many collaborations in music and acting, plus extended touring across Canada and Europe, these three new plays were created in a context of isolation, with limited means and collaborators, and available only online. They contrast the author's extensive and diverse catalogue by their plunge into the history of the Canadian Ukrainian community inspired by his family stories. The isolation and the limited means of production due to the confinement and the proximity of the subjects to his personal trajectory were new challenges for Nawrocki and he found a way to make great art out of them.

The first play of this lockdown trilogy, "EVICTION? Dog's Blood!!" (2020), tells the story of Nick Zynchuk, one of the many poor and unemployed Polish-Ukrainian workers trying to survive with dignity in post-Depression Montreal. His story, which became tragically famous at the time, illustrates the hard but dynamic life in what was then called the



Still image from *Run Nawrocki Run!*

Seeing social struggles through individual characters

historical research, well-crafted dramatic intensity and moments of poetry and humour

Red Plateau, a Montreal neighborhood (today overly gentrified) characterized by an immigrant working class population and radical culture and organizations. The neighborhood was rocked by evictions, but unlike many areas in the city, these were often faced with community organized, street-level resistance.

The following play, "Ukrainians, Pelicans & the Secret of Patterson Lake" (2020,) depicts the long and difficult journey of a Ukrainian peasant family immigrating to Canada at the beginning of the 20th century. Through a series of false promises, miserable traveling, lodging and sanitary conditions, work exploitation and racist oppression, the play follows an old man as he reminisces about arriving in Manitoba during the first wave of Ukrainian immigration to Canada.

"Run Nawrocki Run!" sheds light on the case of the largely unknown forced work camps in Western Canada where thousands of Eastern European immigrants (many of them Canadian citizens) were imprisoned

in the wake of the racist political/collective delirium throughout the country as it entered World War I. The character depicted by Nawrocki was inspired by one of his ancestors who was imprisoned in a camp under inhuman conditions near Banff, Alberta, but was able to escape.

Through these three plays, Nawrocki continues his exploration of the genre of historical drama poetically. Standing on solid historical research in collaboration with local historians, the author allows the public to learn about some untold parts of the people's history of Canada. While this is in itself important, Nawrocki goes further by making his audience *feel* the tragedy of these singular lives, opening through that feeling a sensibility to the injustices inflicted on individuals and groups throughout Canadian history.

The writing is nuanced, with a good sense of drama and sublime moments while evoking a more experimental tone. He achieves a balance between the poignant dimension of the subjective position of the characters in the tragic historical events, and the strangeness of some unconscious/delirious/dreamlike drifts among these dark experiences.

This is particularly well done in "EVICTION? Dog's Blood!!" and "Run Nawrocki Run!," which take the audience into haunting moments that contrast well with the more narrative parts of the plays. One of the greatest strengths of Nawrocki's art is his crossing transversally artistic mediums in

which he uses his capacity to inform the audience about social struggles through the lenses of individual characters, but without moralizing or being too documentary. The power of his art troubles the thinking and perceptions, generating strange affects.

The force of Nawrocki's writing is only partially supported by the staging of the plays. His excellent acting capacities radiate the stage, and he doesn't need many props to take the viewers into the characters' tragic destiny. True to his DIY ethics, this experienced performer is used to minimalist settings and uses a few props in ingenious ways.

Indeed, the best passages of the three plays are probably the ones where quite limited theater sets and props are involved, for example, the interesting use of shadows in "EVICTION!! Dog's Blood!!" But sometimes the low quality of some technological devices and unfortunate attempts in the staging are more distracting than useful. "Ukrainians, Pelicans and the Secret of Patterson Lake" suffers more from these technical limitations. However, this limitation has been significantly overcome in "Run Nawrocki Run!", which is the most technically elaborated play of the trilogy. But even then, only a shovel and a good use of sound effects bring more intensity than a whole complex set-up.

The sonic and musical dimension of Nawrocki's theater work is worth mentioning: the musician not only knows how to craft a good soundtrack for his plays using his violin, but he is also good at creating a whole sonic ambiance supporting the theatrical sequence.

Through the collaborative and technical limitations specific to our time, Norman Nawrocki has found a way to extract singular lives from the depths of history and to make them shine with style. In that sense, the creation of these three online plays connects with what the philosopher Gilles Deleuze said about the creative process of Franz Kafka: "You have to work on the wall, because without a set of impossibilities, you won't have the line of flight, the exit that is creation".

Like his characters who collide against the walls imposed on them by their time, Norman Nawrocki's recent theater plays are true creations, tracing ways between impossibilities.

Hubert Gendron-Blais is a Montreal-based musician, author, and researcher working at the confluence of philosophy, music, and politics. He has published two books, *La charge de l'air* (short stories, 2017) and *Brèches* (poetry, 2012). He began the experimental project *Devenir-ensemble* and the post rock band, *ce qui nous traverse*. hubert-gendron-blais.org

1916: A Fictional War before the War

San Francisco labor struggles form the background

The Blast
Joseph Matthews
PM Press, 2022

ROBERT KNOX

The Blast, a new novel by Joseph Matthews, takes place in San Francisco in 1916, just as the United States edges its way into the general European slaughter known as World War I.

We learn that three years before the current moment, labor radicals and anarchists of various denominations agitated mightily for workers' rights and union recognition in that thriving waterfront shipping town, but failed to make lasting progress.

Now, a new effort, led by militant socialist Tom Mooney, is haltingly under way to organize the city's United Railroad workers. You might describe the arc of this book as what led up to the eventual railroading of Mooney for an act he did not commit. Set in the months leading up to the city's Preparedness Day Parade, an effort by

the city's big businesses and captive mayor to drum up enthusiasm for US entry into the war, the book leads up to a bombing for which labor militants were framed.

Readers unfamiliar with Mooney's role in labor's dark days will not learn of his significance from reading *The Blast*, though if they read the Author's Note at the book's conclusion they will be better informed. I am tempted to urge prospective readers to consult the author's note before beginning the novel, not only for its useful, obviously well researched discussion of the time and place in which the story is set, but for some understanding of why the events in the book's nearly 400 pages matter.

The novel has two central characters. Blue, a still young San Francisco native who left town after the collapse of those earlier union efforts, is a one-time prize fighter "broadly anarchist" in his views, whose significant usefulness for political agitation is his exper-

tise in laying explosives. He appears to have embraced the life of a drifter, going back into the ring when short of ready cash, and only returning to his hometown because of reports that the action on the waterfront has started up again.

Blue's unfocused bumming-about-the-town existence deserves attention only when, a hundred pages in, we learn that he had spent time in England conspiring with "disruptive" suffragists to blow up power stations. This episode, intriguingly told, builds anticipation that a young man of Irish and Italian ancestry, with some obvious talents, will find a way to put them to use in San Francisco.

Blue's history as a youthful prizefighter opens interesting possibilities for storytelling, though again, the compelling piece of the storyline takes place in the past. The main event transpired when a talented local Black fighter, a onetime personal friend, is matched against him in one of those

THE BLAST



Joe Louis versus Max Schmeling race-war mashups.

Now, the Black fighter turns up in a different role—he's a scab—with a meaningful bone to pick with Blue. It's a promising conflict, but we long for a culminating big scene between them in vain.

While we wait for the book's diffuse cast of radicals of varying ethnicities to commit to some form of plot momentum, the novel turns its attention to second central character. Kate Jameson, an intelligent and sympathetic widow of a certain age, routinely demeaned by male authority figures, is somehow plucked from a Boston law office by US Secretary of State Robert Fanning to gather information on whether San Francisco powerbrokers are willing to back America's entry into the war. The city's seaport, we're told, is crucially important to the war effort.

A daughter of Boston's Southie working class neighborhood who married the son of a wealthy family, Kate's main qualification appears to be that she once lived in that city. But for most of the novel her stay in Frisco proves even less productive than Blue's.

The pretentious and frivolous society entertainments in which Kate tries to meet cliched influential rich people and sound them out on their

war-appetite, lack even the pleasurable scrappiness of an episode in which Blue's anarchist acquaintances from different regions of Italy argue over whether a dish of pasta and clams can be served with cheese or not.

Kate's story gains traction when the novel focuses on her real intent in accepting the West Coast job: hunting for her disappeared daughter. It's this search that will turn out to harbor the book's true emotional impact, its claw on the reader's heart.

Before the novel's climax (spoiler alert: potential readers may wish to stop here), the blast that eventually does go off, Kate discovers the circumstances behind her husband's suicide, caused we learn, by what he was forced to do as an Army doctor in the Philippines when Imperial America was suppressing a native insurrection by the kind of vile means later practiced in Vietnam, Iraq, and Guantanamo.

It's tempting to return to my initial assessment and suggest that readers seeking an insight into West Coast political movements in the early nineteen-teens benefit from reading the solid and informative author's note before turning to page one. But don't get misled by the book's arresting and truly marvelous period cover photo depicting eight men in dark coats and hats, all displaying firearms. We learn from the small print on the book's back cover that the photo depicts "a portion of the Gruppo Anarchico Volonta" in San Francisco.

Unlike Chekov's famous adage, "If in the first act you have hung a pistol on the wall, then in the following one, it should be fired. Otherwise, don't put it there," these firearms don't go off.

Robert Knox is the author of *Susso's Lane*, a novel about the origins of the Sacco and Vanzetti case. His new book of linked short stories, *House Stories*, set in counter-culture 1970, is available from Adelaide Books and Amazon.

Magma

Nick DePascal

Three sisters
Sit in judgement—
Darkly, mutely on the mesa,
Apportioned their appointed part
In the cosmic monotony.

A man is shot dead
On ancestral lands (now
"Ran" by the national park
service) praying to
The four directions, hand
On his chest & over
The heart. Belligerent
At the command to leave,
Maybe, but O,
Why not?

Three sisters
Their anger ancient,
Volcanic, a memory of heat,
Magma, and unearthly desire.
The ground around
Is soaked in blood, but
Who owes who?
And what?

Cacti grow
In the cracks
Of black rocks,
Spray bright red flowers
To the sky
In a flood of camaraderie
With the dead, gone.

Nick DePascal is a poet and high school teacher in Albuquerque.

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PRECARIOUS DREAMS

Defending our imagination from hi-tech takeover

by Anarchist neighborhood of Exarchia, Athens, Greece

RON SAKOLSKY

Just as obtaining job-related income is being made more precarious every day by automation, our sleeping hours are now increasingly under siege by the forces of techno-capitalism. In order to more fully understand the growing vulnerability of our dreams to corporate manipulation, the recent phenomenon of “dream incubation”, which involves the implantation of marketable dreams in our heads, is worthy of further investigation.

The avowed commercial intent of “dream incubation” is not only to manipulate what we dream about by means of strategic “product placement” cues addressed to us as we fall asleep, but ultimately to predict and influence our purchasing behavior when awake.

In one sense, this is nothing new. Almost a century ago Sigmund Freud’s nephew, Edward Bernays used his illustrious uncle’s psychological theories on the nature of dreams and the unconscious for propaganda purposes in an advertising/public relations context that has always attempted to link our desires with positive product associations (a typical contemporary example being the linking of car ownership with freedom).

Pursuing the Bernays approach to its logical conclusion, in the mid-twentieth century, there was a brief

vogue for “subliminal” advertising that experimented with targeting waking subjects by using messaging flashed below their perceptual threshold that was intended to create consumer desire for products and services.

Faced with mixed claims for its effectiveness and a popular backlash, this clandestine approach soon fell out of favor. However, corporate penetration of the more intimate realm of sleep is now being publicly-touted by marketers as a new scientific frontier. Consequently, today, the colonization of the dream world employs the latest technological developments to catapult corporate invasiveness to the next level of mindfuckery.

Take the Apple Watch or that company’s iPhone sleep app, or else the Google Fitbit or the same corporation’s Nesthub. Tech companies now make watches, wearables, and apps that are capable of monitoring our sleeping states and mining our dreams.

Since these extractivist techniques are presently being researched and developed within the logical assumptions of surveillance capitalism, it is only a matter of time before technocapitalists gain the capacity to not only sell any acquired sleep data obtained for profit but to actively breach the porous walls of our untrammelled dream worlds with their own implanted desires. And, even worse, the sleeper, probably will not even remember having their dreams hacked

upon awakening. This is not a paranoid fantasy to be realized in some distant dystopian future.

The technical research on the use of implantation devices for communicating with sleeping subjects is openly being shaped and refined right now, and its full implementation is not an “if” but a “when” proposition. Not content to control us in our waking hours of wage slavery, corporate “dream engineers” today seek to pierce the veil of our slumber with their enslaving consumer messages.

But why would we consent to such a blatant commercialization of our dreamscape? Well, why do we consent to any of the personal indignities and violations of privacy that participating in high-tech civilization increasingly entails?

While some may consciously choose not to own the monitoring devices that make this corporate snooping and infiltration possible, all those who do or will own them, are either so addicted to the technological platforms on which they appear, so convinced of other seemingly more positive applications available there, or so pressured to do so by their employers, that they are willing to accept the quid pro quo bargain of looking the other way and hoping for the best.

No worries, the promotional image of “dream incubation” research portrays it as potentially having beneficial uses when it comes to treating such medical problems as chronic sleep-

But why would we consent to such a blatant commercialization of our dreamscape?

deprivation, recurrent nightmares or even Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). However, for most who consent, the buy-in would merely involve something as mundane as a wish to improve irregular sleep patterns, and many would automatically acquiesce without much thought, knowledge or understanding of the consequences.

Even those more reluctant to be participants may simply submit to the corporate conquest of their dreams because they feel that they have no choice other than to do so in a runaway world of unstoppable technological determinism.

As an example of one of the more intoxicating incentives to participate in Targeted Dream Incubation (TDI) experiments; on the night before the 2021 Super Bowl, the Molson-Coors brewing company kicked off its TDI campaign by promising free beer to volunteers in what they dubbed in grandiose terms as the "the world's largest dream study."

They hired a Harvard psychologist to design enticing "dream incubation" stimuli which mixed images of Coors beer cans and refreshing alpine streams, and even brought international pop star Zayn Malik on board as celebrity marketing bait by contracting with him to be featured asleep on Instagram Live while subjecting himself to an implanted Coors dream.

Technologically-speaking, the Coors TDI experimentation was made possible by such wearable "dream incubation" devices as the newly-minted, "Dormio", developed at MIT. It pairs 3 sleep sensors with a computer or smartphone in the process of prompting users to think about the stimulating images that are presented to them before sleep which are later to be surreptitiously reinforced by hacking them directly into the participants' dreams.

Big deal you say, nothing more than a can of beer is at stake here, so what's the problem? However, what if such a "dream incubation" gambit was not merely about selling piss water beer, but about injecting nocturnal messages aimed at selling a President or reinforcing the behavioral norms of consensus reality that make voting for Presidents seem like the limits of political action? Will the next step in this Orwellian saga be learning to love Big Brother?

At the American Marketing Association's New York 2021 Future of Marketing conference, a study was presented which found that of 400 US marketing firms, 77% aimed to use dream-tech advertising in the next 3 years. In regard to the sleep data obtained in such situations, TDI researchers Adam Haar Horowitz and Robert Stickgold (both of whom worked on the team that developed "Dormio") and fellow dream researcher, Antonio Zadra, offer us the following ultra-creepy interactive consumer data exploitation scenario:

"Imagine this data being sold to corporations selling

sleeping aids, so that, after a particularly restless night, the ads that appear during your internet searches are for Benadryl, Ambien or Tylenol PM, even though you might not remember how poorly you slept. Since sleep loss is known to cause risk-taking behavior, one might expect to be hit with targeted ads for online gambling. As there is evidence linking sleep loss to sugar intake as well, ads for candy might pop up.

Going further and taking a cue from their research on changing candy preferences during naps, one can easily imagine a musician collaborating with a manufacturer of Skittles to offer an hour-long nap soundtrack that incubates psychedelic candy dreams. Consumers could get half off on candy just for listening to a relaxing nap soundtrack, and there might be no legal requirement for clear informed consent about how the incubation could

drive purchasing behavior. Candy in hand, perhaps you would want to watch a show while you snack.

A promotion with Netflix could mean your subscription comes with dream incubation stimuli as well, enabling dreams related to a new show after you binge-watch until bedtime, all while measures of sleep quality—including changes in your breathing and heartrate during dreams—tell advertisers whether these stimuli were well received and how to target and tailor future advertisements."

And no doubt there are those in government positions that are watching the development of TDI research with bated breath and an eye toward putting it to repressive use in a statist context.

It is said that proto-surrealist French poet Saint-Paul-Roux used to place a sign on his bedroom door before going to sleep each night which read, "Poet at Work."

For Surrealists, the dream is a source of poetic illumination and revelation. It suggests a higher form of reality. In this expansive sense, dreaming can be considered a political threat because of its subversive potential as a seedbed for imagining and manifesting a life worth living.

Dreams can be disruptive to the authoritarian status quo because they are potentially a source of critical utopian visions that can challenge the miserabilism of an increasingly dystopian reality which characteristically insists that it is the only possible reality. Rather than acquiescing to the domestication of our dreams via the techno-pathology of "dream incubation", why not seek to carve out a more rebellious oneiric path?

- Resist the dream-snatchers!
- Defend the Marvelous!

Ron Sakolsky's latest book is *Dreams of Anarchy and the Anarchy of Dreams: Adventures at the Crossroads of Anarchy and Surrealism* (Autonomedia, 2021)



NORMAN NAWROCKI

During the worldwide youth revolt in 1968, Lenny Kwok was a 13-year old Hong Kong high school student handing out radical pamphlets with his friends. He got busted, but it didn't stop him from continuing to agitate for anarchism.

Flash forward 53 years, and Lenny is still at it. He has spent a life-time as a Hong Kong anarchist/artist/musician/singer/author, but now lives in Taiwan following repression from the Chinese government.

He recently wrote and performed in *Peter & Emma's Bookcafe*, a brilliant, entertaining and ground-breaking Chinese anarchist operetta inspired by the lives of Peter Kropotkin and Emma Goldman. The project was born as a creative anarchist response to the current pandemic.

In 2019, Lenny was visiting Taiwan to present a political performance and art exhibit, *9 Songs: a sonic documentary for social struggle*. Hong Kong was going through major social upheavals at that moment. Then, COVID hit. In a humanitarian gesture, Taiwan extended the stay of all foreigners, including Lenny. But the extension did not automatically grant permission to work on the island. Lenny needed to find a sponsor who could help him obtain that permission. Thankfully, a local theatre company, Against-again Theatre Troupe, commissioned him to create something for them.

Lenny never planned to move to Taiwan, but found himself stuck there. Curiously, he had thought of shipping his personal library to Taiwan to start a new anarchist book café, but wondered who would really be interested? His predicament inspired him to write the operetta centered around two well-known historic anarchist figures, Peter Kropotkin and Emma Goldman. In the show, they meet by chance in modern day Taipei, and together decide to start a bookshop. According to Lenny, "Few in Taiwan know anything about Peter or



An anarchist operetta set in Taiwan *Peter & Emma's Bookcafe*

Emma, including those in the young theatre company. But once I explained their historical significance on the world stage and the development of anarchism, they thought it was a great idea and fully supported me."

The storyline follows Peter and Emma stuck in Taipei during the COVID pandemic wanting to do something worthy instead of wasting their time. They search for a place to open a bookshop/café where people can gather, something typical of 1930s Berlin and Paris. In the operetta, friends drop by, including a farmer, a baker, a sex worker, and an overseas student to meet up, share stories, ideas and solidarity."

In between scenes filled with these ordinary, but rich conversations, Lenny introduces relevant historical elements. Since Emma wrote about child labor, the actor portraying her tells a story of a Chinese child worker in the 1930s. Lenny reads an excerpt from Kropotkin's *An appeal to the Young*. Elsewhere in a song, Alexander Berkman, once Emma's lover, writes to her to ask for money to buy a gun for an assassination attempt. Emma finds herself torn whether to send the money.

The baker friend studied cuisine in

Italy and arrives on stage with fresh baked bread to share with the audience during the performance. Over drinks in the book café, the characters discuss the explosive situation in China and Hong Kong historically and today.

Live music, song, witty dialogue, historical anarchist references, debates, Asian history, and interactions with the audience are all part of the operetta performed by Lenny, his partner, June, and a group of friends. They hoped to tour Taiwan with the production, but the pandemic worsened, so they canceled their plans.

Peter & Emma has only been performed twice in Taipei both times at The Witch House, a famous feminist pub. "In Taiwan, we have the right to free speech and freedom of expression, so we can talk about anything," according to Lenny. "The audiences loved it and gave warm, energetic and enthusiastic responses to the show."

The operetta is a first for Lenny in his decades long and remarkable artistic career, but part of a continuum of work dating back to his early activism in Hong Kong and his legendary anarchist cabaret band, Blackbird.

Active from 1984 to 2004, Blackbird

The storyline follows Peter and Emma stuck in Taipei during the COVID pandemic wanting to do something worthy instead of wasting their time. They search for a place to open a bookshop/café where people can gather

played a vital role in the Asian and international underground music scene with seven albums and many compilations, their tours, documentary films, and publications.

Blackbird's roots, like Lenny's, date to the 1970s when they were part of The 70s, a Hong Kong anarchist group "opposed to both Western capitalism and the Chinese state-capitalist bureaucracy."

The '70s operated a radical book and print shop and published revolutionary writings from Bakunin to Rosa Luxemburg. When a core member of the group shared his observations and experiences after travels abroad meeting international anarchists, the ideas and practices of Judith Malina and Julian Beck's Living Theatre resonated with the Hong Kong comrades.

They started the People's Theatre in the early 1980s, saying they intended to "vulgarize the bourgeois notion of theatre," maintaining that "common people can do theatre as well," vowing to "disregard the standards and aesthetics of theatre," and their live shows reflected this.

Lenny started Blackbird to perform together with the theatre troupe. The band and the People's Theatre of Hong Kong boldly staged their political multidisciplinary shows regularly around university campuses. The dynamic and provocative, twelve-person anarchist performance unit caught the attention of local media and soon became a cultural phenomenon.

"Besides theatre and music, our shows were also multi-media events with videos, installations and performance art," Lenny says. "We smashed TVs on stage and used different dramatic tactics."

Lenny and friends attended the 1984 Venice International Anarchist Gathering and made a film of their experience. According to Lenny, "The Venice gathering was like my baptism in anarchism, instrumental in consolidating my position as an anarchist, and living my life accordingly." He met anarchist writers like Murray Bookchin, Albert Meltzer, and Ronald Creagh, "my anarchist elders."

Post-Venice, he attended south Korea's first international anarchist confer-

ence in Seoul and traveled to Japan and Europe to meet more anarchist comrades. Blackbird continued recording and releasing albums, publishing fanzines, and developing collaborations worldwide (like with their sister band, Rhythm Activism in Montreal).

In Taiwan, as in Hong Kong, Lenny continues to write, play music, and work on documentaries doing his best to "survive as an anarchist without being employed officially by any institution." (A documentary version of the operetta, "Peter & Emma's book café" with English subtitles will be presented online at the 2022 Montreal International Anarchist Theatre Festival in May. Details: anarchisttheatrefestival.com/en/news.)

Norman Nawrocki is a Montreal troublemaker. His last play was Run Nawrocki Run! Escape from Banff Prison. His latest book is The Legend of the Rat King. His last album is Displaced/Misplaced. Pre-pandemic, he toured the world with his music, theatre & books. He's always been an anarchist.

Another cosmic hoax perpetrated upon us by Colonialism: We live under a social contract.

The Racial Contract
Charles W. Mills
Cornell University Press 1993

FRANK JOYCE

No, we don't. We live under a *racial* contract. Calling it something else, such as a *social* contract is part of the racial contract's system of concealing itself.

The late Charles Mills clarified this matter quite definitively in *The Racial Contract*, a 133-page book published in 1993.

For most of my adult life I have wrestled with the question, is *everything* about race? I have concluded that it is. *The Racial Contract* was of immense help to me in figuring that out.

Here's how Mills puts it in the introduction:

"Ironically, the most important political system of recent global history—the system of domination by which white people have historically and in certain ways continue to rule over nonwhite people—is not seen as a political system

at all. It is just taken for granted; it is the background against which other systems, which we are to see as political, are highlighted. This book is an attempt to redirect your vision to make you see what, in a sense, has been there all along."

Engulfed as we are in raging controversies about the use of the n-word, book banning, statue removals, school curriculum, and environmental racism, it has become easier than ever to grasp the centrality of race to the essence of the United States. But not *that* easy.

Centuries of distraction and denial are not effortlessly dissolved. They do not disappear of their own accord. Left, liberal, and neo-liberal (whatever that is) thinking still relegates white supremacy and white racial identity to some sort of subordinate status to the real deal: economics. Often expressed more directly as class.

That's how I saw it for decades. As a side note for discussion another time, the white way of thinking also dismissively treats violence, gender, culture, spirituality, and relations with other life forms as lesser categories for understanding the behavior of homo sapiens. The writing of the late bell hooks is very helpful at understanding these connections.

Here's one set of assumptions to start thinking differently about race.

White people of all classes participated in race-justified settler colonialism.

Very few white people of any class opposed it.

There were white people of all classes who supported race-based capitalist slavery.

There were white people of all classes who opposed race-based capitalist slavery. This was true of the abolitionist movement in the 1800s and it is true of the antiracist movement now.

White people of all classes are racist.

White people of all classes are antiracist.

Making matters a little more com-

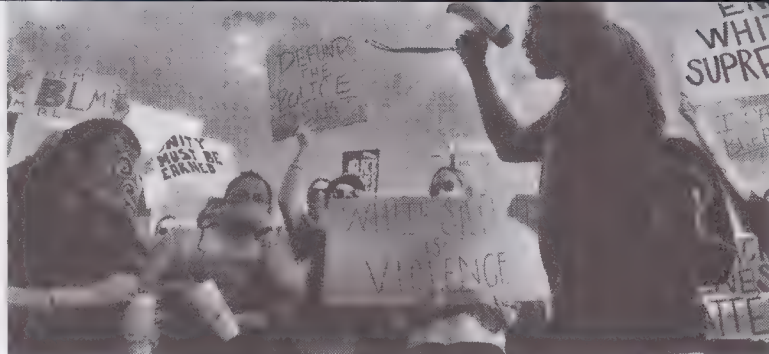
plicated, to paraphrase, U.S. author and anti-racist activist, Ibram X. Kendi, a white person can do an antiracist thing in the morning and three racist things in the afternoon of the same day.

The white left has always struggled with race not just from an analytic perspective, but from garden variety racist attitudes as well.

Sometimes, as with self-proclaimed socialist Jack London, the racism has been overt. In 2017, the *East Bay Express* published an expose on London that included this paragraph, "His 1911 novel *Adventure* includes a white man who 'rode pick-a-back on a woolly-headed, black-skinned savage.' Enough said."

In other cases, the left has been functionally white supremacist in more passive ways, just as with white supremacy writ large. To be clear, there is nothing to suggest any superior antiracist insight or practice within the annals of anarchism either.

In *The Dawn of Everything*, David Graeber and David Wengrow demystify the superficially different, but essentially the same ideas of the big-name western thinkers, white supremacist to a man, including Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, John Stuart Mill, David Hume, Jean



Jacques Rousseau, and Immanuel Kant, and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel.

In *The Racial Contract*, Charles Mills did what Graeber and Wengrow do, but almost thirty years earlier. The critiques overlap somewhat although Mills's is through the lens of white supremacy.

Counterintuitive though it might seem at first glance, the possibilities for building a multiracial, multiethnic, multigender, multinational political movement are now greater than they have ever been. Both of these books are essential reading for formulating its intellectual framework.

Frank Joyce is a lifelong Detroit based activist and writer. He has written for the Fifth Estate for over 50 years and once was its News Editor. He is coeditor with Karin Aguilar-San Juan, of *The People Make the Peace: Lessons from the Vietnam Anti-War Movement*. He is currently writing a book about unlearning white supremacy.

SPACE IS NOT THE PLACE

...and Lea's fictional spaceship society is, essentially, totalitarian

Hermetica
Alan Lea
Detritus Books 2021

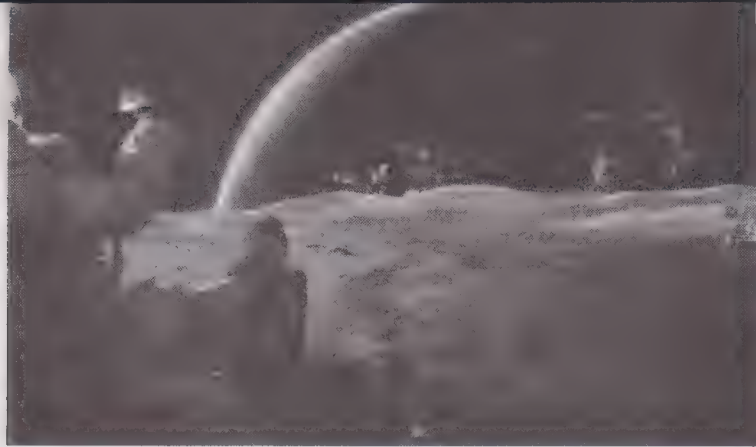
JESS FLARITTY

The journey of a generation ship is a classic of the science fiction genre. One that tells the story of what happens when a bunch of humans decide to leave Earth in a sub-light-speed rocket that will take generations to reach its destination.

The lack of unlimited resources and tight living conditions enables an author to experiment with alternative organizations

of society, what critic Brian Attebery refers to as a science fiction parabola. The parabola is intriguing because it is boundless despite having an origin point, as J.D. Bernal's long essay, *The World, the Flesh, and the Devil*, published in 1929, is the progenitor of the generation ship as a concept. In contrast, Alan Lea's novella *Hermetica* is the latest data point along the parabola's edge.

Confinement is at the heart of Lea's story. An appropriate theme if you've trapped in a giant tin can hurtling through space or just stuck in your apartment because of the pandemic. Part mystery and part social philosophy, *Hermetica* is notable



for its extensive use of the they/them pronoun, though it is a quick read and may leave the reader feeling unsatisfied by the ending.

The story is told from the perspective of Dase, a gender-neutral person who works as a futuristic massage therapist on the massive generation ship, *Hermetica*, which is populated by millions of people. The book is also an alternate history, as Lea envisions a more utopian version of our reality, one where NASA and the U.S. military had their budgets switched in the 1970s, so the ship could be built and ready for departure by 2022. The reason for abandoning the planet is shrouded in mystery, but this makes sense considering the plot twist later in the story.

The story takes place in the 2050's, making Dase one of the unlucky ones on board because they have no memories of the real Earth and will also die before the ship ever reaches New Terra. This gives the character a sense of being stuck in limbo, suffering from a never-ending lack of closure, and further extends the theme of existential hopelessness one might feel if they were trapped their whole lives in perpetual quarantine.

Dase uses the pronouns they/them, and all the other characters in *Hermetica* are also referred to in agender ways. The only moment I encountered where I could assume someone's gender is when Dase mentions their film professor as being a "kindly, bearded old person," though in this future, perhaps women can get hormone treatments to grow beards if they want one, so even maleness here can't be assumed.

Dialogue is blocked without any "he said/she said/they said" tags, which is perhaps why Dase can only ever talk to one person at a time, but this ultimately doesn't feel like a limitation, and Lea's use of they/them feels organic on the sentence level after only a couple of pages.

All the characters end up a little blurry as a result of being agender, however, what do Dase's friends, Milty and Zimp, actually look like? As readers, we can't be told too-specific details or else we might start thinking of them as male or female, which is what Lea is trying to avoid.

Science fiction juggernaut Kim Stanley Robinson was aware of this problem ten years ago when he wrote *2312*, as that gender-bending novel features a person named Mqaret, who is genderless and therefore, for some reason, impossible for the author to sketch using words. This problem continues in Lea's story, and much like the notion of a non-binary person passing for one gender or another in the real world today,

doesn't appear to be going away anytime soon.

Hermetica has another sinister side. Despite the ship's society being more egalitarian than ours in its approach to gender, Dase lives in a state of hyper-surveillance that includes close monitoring of their own body, accompanied by a daily drug regimen. The reader's Truman Show radar should start beeping well before Dase discovers an old scrap of newspaper behind their unit's wall panel, and the alarm bells should really go off when they learn that nobody is allowed to do any experiments related to gravity, which might prove that the ship isn't in space after all. The later reveal of the ultimate truth behind *Hermetica*, which I won't spoil here, is both clever and satisfying—Lea does a great job building up to this moment.

There is also a strong anti-authoritarian subtext in Lea's approach to gender, and Dase can eventually be seen as a sympathetic anarchist in their desire to know the truth about their society. But the ruling forces, never personified as a single individual, continue to suppress any critical information. The reader is eventually shown that the ship is essentially totalitarian, while Dase continues to attack the weak points of this society's control, which is related to both knowledge and forced labor.

The main weakness of *Hermetica* is shared by other literary works of science fiction with political themes, as the plot seems to run out of energy halfway through and then fully gets stuck in second gear. Lea also does a fair amount of soapboxing related to Dase's notion of obsolete gender pronouns, which are interesting asides but also kind of tedious, and for me, these segments only kicked me out of the narrative's fictive dream.

The story also wavers into a kind of metafiction at times, as Dase researches climate denialists in the American 20th century, and there's mention of a choking disease called ARPV-20 that is obviously a direct analogy to Covid-19. These parts of the story serve almost as a satire of our reality, and I suspect that different readers will react to these segments in a broad range of emotions, from outrage to smugness, or even vague amusement.

Despite these minor faults, I recommend that you pick up *Hermetica* from Detritus books and discover the mysteries of this novella for yourself, which can be easily consumed in a single afternoon. Lea's contribution to the generation ship parabola is an admirable one, and perhaps future authors can use this data point to fuel their own creative works, as our notion of gender continues to undergo a quiet revolution.

Is a society where we're all they/them tilting us more into utopia or dystopia? This question itself is a false binary that *Hermetica* and other works of transgressive science fiction continue to dissolve.

Jess Flarity (he/him) is a science fiction writer and a PhD student in Literature at the University of New Hampshire. His dissertation might be about the history of non-binary gender in science fiction or something else, as he's in limbo at the moment as well.

Subverting Establishment Suppression— ACT UP & Explosions from the Margins

Against gentrification of the mind

BRYAN TUCKER

The AIDS Coalition To Unleash Power—known by its acronym ACT UP—coalesced in the late 1980s with a simple motivation: the desire to live.

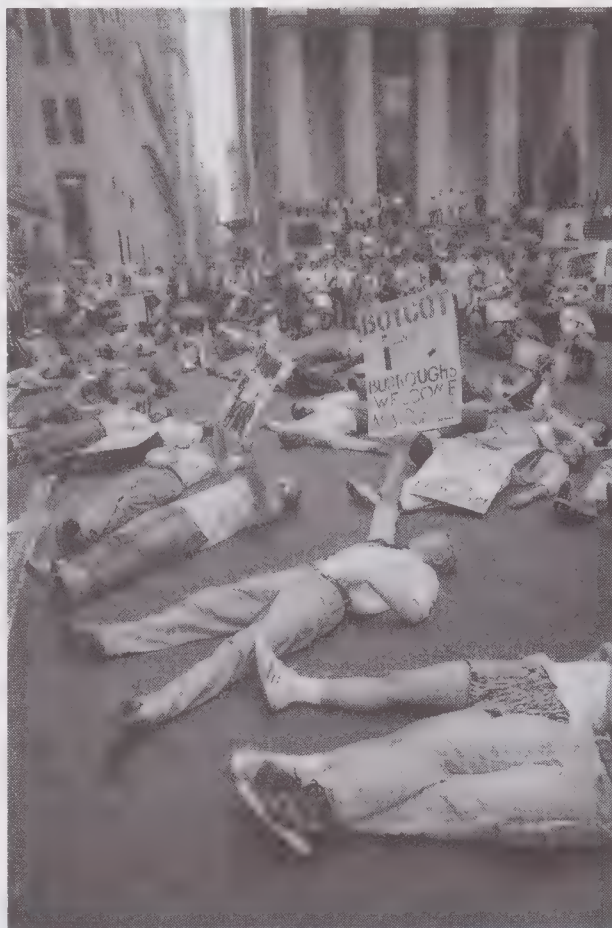
This group is a striking example of the influence marginalized people using radical approaches can have. The ambitious and judicious group, founded in New York City on March 12, 1987, set their initial sights on exposing neglect and falsifications about the AIDS epidemic. They demanded attention and significant action from politicians, Wall Street, and the Catholic church.

In the early 1980s, those afflicted with HIV/AIDS were hated and ignored, with the major government and media systems disregarding the nascent health crisis. The initial sufferers were primarily gay men—the original acronym for HIV/AIDS was GRID: Gay Related Immune Deficiency.

The elites in power were motivated to conceal the suffering and deaths of those they detested and considered disposable. They didn't want to expose the inadequacies of the U.S. health care system and the disgusting profiteering of pharmaceutical companies. The Reagan-era pretensions about clean living and abstinence led and exacerbated this trend.

Development of treatment drugs was slow, and information related to HIV/AIDS was patchy and partial. Those who fell ill often lost jobs which impacted their ability to pay for health care or housing. As the pandemic expanded and intensified, many people were dying alone, some homeless on the street. Gentrification in New York City ramped up simultaneously with AIDS, resulting in a significant increase in homelessness.

Reporting and media coverage at the time was insufficient to the scale, and inaccurate about the specifics of the situation. This, along with a lack of research funding, contributed to a popular discourse filled with falsehoods. In his essay, "Do Not Doubt the Dangerousness of the 12-inch Politician," AIDS



At the New York Stock Exchange, 1989

activist, artist, and writer David Wojnarowicz, asserted, "If you look at newspapers you rarely see a representation of anything you believe to be the world you inhabit."

The Incendiary, Inventive Margins

ACT UP (AU) formed out of many previous, less focused groupings, and utilized direct action, confrontation, disruption, and DIY tactics. The idea of "queering a movement" (i.e., the refusal to stay in the shadows and accept the suppression of establishment norms) originated from AU, but the mantra the group is best known for is "Silence=Death." AU did not require full consensus for participants to engage in actions, so individuals planned and carried out adaptable, rapid mobilizations.

The group's initial action was a march on Wall Street in 1987. But a more notorious engagement occurred inside the New York Stock Exchange a few years later, on September 14, 1989, resulting in the first ever shut down

of the trading floor. Succeeding these, AU actions included confronting then-president George H.W. Bush at his vacation home in Maine, and the interruption of future-president Bill Clinton's birthday celebration in Manhattan. Demonstrations, occupations, and interruptions were utilized to shame public figures promoting heteronormativity and delaying assistance to HIV sufferers.

During the 20th century AU participants also disrupted the functioning of corporations, dumped the ashes of those cremated after dying of AIDS on the steps of government buildings, confronted Center for Disease Control (CDC) representatives, and blocked the doors and roads leading to the National Institute of Health in Washington, DC.

Access to medicine and treatment, and increased housing for those with HIV were some of the reforms achieved early on by AU NY. They also facilitated changes that allowing for women with a positive status to receive disability benefits.

Though gentrification is frequently regarded as a real estate development trend consisting of overpriced, ugly residential buildings, there are also social and ideological components to it.

During the height of the crisis, care networks were organized to offer emotional support and to bring items to those in need.

From New York, the movement spread to other large U.S. cities, such as Los Angeles and Chicago, as well as the South. It expanded globally to Kenya, France, India and elsewhere. Global consciousness was baked into the foundation of AU and numerous actions took place at the New York consulates of foreign countries. One example was the 2002 action at the Chinese consulate which resulted in the release from prison of China's foremost AIDS activist, Wan Yanhai.

Theatrics, choreography, and approaches designed to deliver a jolt were often applied by AU. A successful 2004 action utilized nude protest in demanding the U.S. suspend the debt owed by poor countries with major AIDS epidemics, so funds could be used to treat and slow the transmission of the disease.

The initial AU manifestations included many highly expressive people, such as artists and sub-culture participants. The rigor and style not only helped with identifying relevant targets and executing effective actions, but also yielded psychological and aesthetic effects due to the magnetism of the cogent, playful, and scrappy outsider methods. Many were influenced by the example of making those impeding progress in treating and managing HIV/AIDS face direct consequences.

As the 21st century progressed, the approaches of some AU groups shifted. Participants became more involved with non-profit work and have aligned more with CDC agendas. This inclination towards working inside of bureaucratic systems is pervasive and is an example of the gentrification of subversion/activism.

Though gentrification is frequently regarded as a real estate development trend consisting of overpriced, ugly residential buildings, there are also social and ideological components to it. Along with gentrification has come a decrease in awareness of how political and corporate structures affect us, and an increased acceptance of alienation and paranoid security culture. Changes within AU were inevitable as the acute die-off from AIDS subsided, and the CDC made concessions in response to the actions of early AU participants.

Presently, AU still effectively disseminates information on viruses, contributes to the management of viral epidemics and pandemics, and is influential in decreasing the suffering caused by HIV/AIDS and other viruses. Besides expansion nationally and globally AU has also spawned a variety of offshoots including Dyke March, Queer Nation, Housing Works, and numerous other assemblages, movements, and events. Some of these spin-off groups maintain devotion to the original AU spirit, employing a dynamic and confrontational outsider's approach, as do some current branches of AU.

Sarah Schulman is a writer, a participant in and documenter of AU history. In her book *Gentrification of the Mind*, she explains that discomfort caused by being confronted by

the truth is necessary to threaten the supremacy of establishment convention. In her view, truth is often marginalized, and even considered anti-social, due to the discomfort it can induce. The artistic, impudent, intellectual structure of early AU didn't coincide agreeably with mass media sterility, triviality, and one-dimensionality.

Schulman is concerned with how the style of LGBTQ discrimination has shifted from the subjection to overt establishment hatred, to internalized self-hate manifesting in efforts to self-sanitize and temper expression and speech. Current tolerance is largely based on this sanitization, on the avoidance of expressing queer consciousness or aspects of queer culture. For example, the avoidance of discussing gay sex or engaging in displays that could be viewed as too transgressive. In short, she feels that, in our gentrified era, rejection has been turned inward and the presentation of LGBTQ relations cleaned up. She advocates a revival of discussion of the disconcerting and messy passions that constitute reality. In her Winter 2021 *Fifth Estate* article, "Fight to Win," Rory Eliot (AU oral history fundraising manager), explains that "the maintenance of the status quo is the crisis." It is abundantly clear that needs related to healthcare, housing, and viral pandemic management in the present are unmet. As things stand, the marginalized and unrepresented have vast potential for breakthroughs, as the decaying establishment is increasingly vulnerable to radical action and only has superficial and partial solutions to offer.

Bryan Tucker is a frequent contributor to the Fifth Estate and has been involved with social equality movements and projects around the San Francisco Bay Area for the past 15 years.

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Hot off the press in 1969, a reader looks at the new issue. —photo: Alan Gotkin

Geography, Progress, and Its Discontents

Reflections on Turner's *Beyond Geography*

**Beyond Geography: The Western Spirit
against the Wilderness**

Frederick Turner

Viking, 1980

STEVE IZMA

Beyond Geography first came to my attention in the early 1980s when Fredy Perlman began his arguments in *Against His-story, Against Leviathan!* with an appraisal of Turner's book. Both of these texts attracted attention from the anarchist milieu around the Fifth Estate at the time, especially for those of us trying to build an historical picture of where human society went wrong.

As Perlman stated in *Against His-story*,

"Frederick Turner borrows the lights of human communities beyond civilization's kene to see beyond geography. He sees with the eyes of the dispossessed of this once beautiful world that rests on a turtle's back, this double continent whose ponds emptied, whose banks were rent, whose forests became arid craters from the day it was named America."

Unlike most anti-capitalists, many in the anarchist and anti-authoritarian tradition see the linearity of history as an aberration from the regenerative cycles of nature. At some point, human beings went off on a tangent into a trajectory of hierarchy, aggression, property, and exploitation. From this perspective the transition from feudalism to capitalism—so minutely and obsessively studied by Marxists—explained very little. The more closely anti-authoritarians examined the history of civilization, the more the roots of oppression receded into the past.

If we confine our scope of political discussion to the history of capitalism, especially under the Marxist definition that sets the early boundary only a few hundred years ago, we can become easily trapped in the idea that human na-



Peter Blume, *The Rock*, 1943/1948

ture is equivalent to the capitalist mindset rooted in competition and convinced of the need for aggression in order to survive. But a longer look at human existence, which goes hundreds of thousands of years outside of history, gives us a contrast to our current conditions that radically challenges this conventional idea of our nature.

Materialism versus Superstition: A False Dichotomy

Turner contemplates this contrast as the distance between us (members of Western societies) and

"human beings whose relationship to their lands was dictated by an oblique but strong recognition of human biology, by the particularities of those lands, and by a living mythology that celebrated all this.... This, then, is an essay in spiritual history... founded

on that surest of realities: the human spirit and its dark necessity to realize itself through body and place."

This is a call not to superstition, but to a critique of the Western myth that filters out spirit and leaves only the traces of measurable activity. All organizations, religious, political, and cultural, build stories to justify their existence, and even what we think of these days as "evidence-based" science is constructed on interpretations, usually fragile, of our observations of the world. We become dangerously self-satisfied to think that somehow we have established truths that eclipse all previous belief systems.

Pointing out the qualitative differences among the ways in which different societies legitimize themselves, Turner shows how the mythologies of original peoples invariably presented

Turner discusses the many aspects of the violent interface between nature-centred societies and property-centred ones.

our earthly environment as the center of creation and reproduction, not surprisingly associating these processes with female essences, too simplistically referred to in our times as deities.

He then demonstrates the relationship between, on the one hand, the shift in human activity from hunter-gathering to sedentary agriculture and, on the other, the shift from female to male deities, an inversion of seeing the earth as the mother-center of existence to seeing the sky as the abstraction of male dynamism. In this new system, the sky's rain and sunshine make the now-passive earth productive.

Along, then Beyond History

Turner discusses the many aspects of the violent interface between nature-centered societies and property-centered ones. His chapters focus on a series of pivotal events, like the rise of monotheism, the technologies of empire expansion in Classical times, and various examples of imperialist aggression, first aimed against mostly European and Asian barbarians, then expanding outwards to all parts of the globe.

He charts the need for and the rise of a coherent ideology to bind the increasingly diverse citizens of these empires together. Christianity, the epitome of the sky-based, monotheistic belief systems, fitted the bill perfectly.

Emerging just as the imperialism centered in the Italian peninsula faltered, the Holy Roman Empire structured European society in a way that co-ordinates the political needs of various warrior fiefdoms. But it also allowed for the accumulation and co-ordination of economic resources needed to build roads, fleets, and markets.

Turner describes the demonization of Christianity's enemies that fueled the wars against Islam, but also led to the internal purifications of culture and thought, as policed by the Inquisition. Referring to German sociologist Max Weber's ideas on the rise of capitalism, Turner points to the process whereby pagan spirits are erased from

the world. He writes that, as a consequence of fighting paganism and internal heresies, the world starts to appear

"as neutral and even empty of all spirit life. To Weber, this view resulted in the conception of the world as an open field for such human activity as might be pleasing to a god infinitely removed from it.... Such a non-sacramental world, bereft of spirit, its gods and sacred groves and megaliths reduced to euhemeristic [i.e., historically rationalized] ciphers, or else banished to devilish realism, could pose no resistance to those intensive investigations of nature that ultimately resulted in the West's celebrated ability to expand."

Thus, the earth becomes passive material, mere resources, unworthy of the kind of respect one would naturally bestow on a living entity. The Christian god has created the earth, but not breathed into it, and just leaves it behind for human beings to stand on.

Referring to the American critic of technology Lewis Mumford, Turner observes

"that the greatly increased fund of scientific knowledge was accompanied by a 'deformation of experience as a whole.' The instruments of science, he writes, 'were helpless in the realm of qualities. The qualitative was reduced to the subjective: the subjective was dismissed as unreal, and the unseen and immeasurable as non-existent.'"

This is the framework Turner uses to analyze the Spanish invasion of the Americas and then the destructive westward movement of the American colonization effort—new directions, new territory, but always occurring within the paradigm of fear of the wilderness and, especially, of its peoples.

With Europe consolidated by the late 15th century, more resources could be invested into exploration and exploitation of the lands beyond that continent. But after 1500, the Christian empire's ability to plaster over the fractures within the Holy Roman Empire weakened fatally. The subsequent two hundred years of wars and civil wars

brought the old order to its knees.

The Enlightenment and the Religion of Science

Most rationalists and materialists have difficulty understanding how the Christian Church has struggled throughout its history to maintain a coherent, rules-based control over the state.

The Church hierarchy has always recognized the need to separate phenomenon that can be explained by natural processes from miracles that have no other explanation than an act of God, especially an act of God that has resulted from an intercession on our behalf by a saint.

But this need for a probing rationality leaves the Church itself open to criticism. The very process of separating natural things from divine things set the Church firmly on a path of scientific rationalism that was bound to undermine its own dogma.

It's a mistake to dwell on the notion that the Enlightenment of the early 18th century brought us into the modern world by separating the Church from the state. A more accurate assessment would point to a new palace coup. The bourgeoisie, with its ideology of a mythless, secular state, believed they had laid the groundwork for a society that would evermore progress on the basis of a materialist set of laws.

They merely replaced the old state ideology, nominally Christian, with a scientism that immediately set to work eradicating all the remnants of primitive, nature-based paradigms. Despite the adulation of nature underlying a Romantic movement that reacted to the soullessness of the Enlightenment, the new ruling class and its dominant ideology effectively portrayed the peoples peripheral to Europe as impediments to a fully capitalist exploitation of global territory.

Today, we still have as tight an integration of ideology and the state as that experienced by humanity during the Middle Ages. The Church of Scientism

runs a civil service ordained by global industrial players, particularly in the chemical and technology industries.

These and the politicians constitute a clergy who have grabbed the bull of progress by the horns and propelled themselves into the monopolistic citadels of Big Agriculture, Big Pharma,

and their brethren. Their evangelism has created our environmental and medical crises and their ideological hold on all our educational institutions helps to shift the blame away from them towards a demonized nature.

Turner, in grappling with the contradictions of a linear and sterile geog-

raphy-history, leaves us to ask: How can we regain our sense of place within the natural world as the beginning of a resistance to its modern destroyers?

Steve Izma is a typographer and computer programmer in Kitchener, Ontario.

Ontological anarchy and punk-inspired zine culture

Jason Rodgers' rich discourse and presentation

Invisible Generation: Rants, Polemics, and Critical Theory Against the Planetary Work Machine
Jason Rodgers
Autonomedia, 2021

OLCHAR E. LINDSANN

For many years, Jason Rodgers has been a motivating presence in a startlingly large number of anarchist zine projects and communities, including frequently in this magazine. Her work has been published in a great many collective contexts, but always singly and hard to find. In *Invisible Generation*, her diverse body of critical writing has finally been brought together.

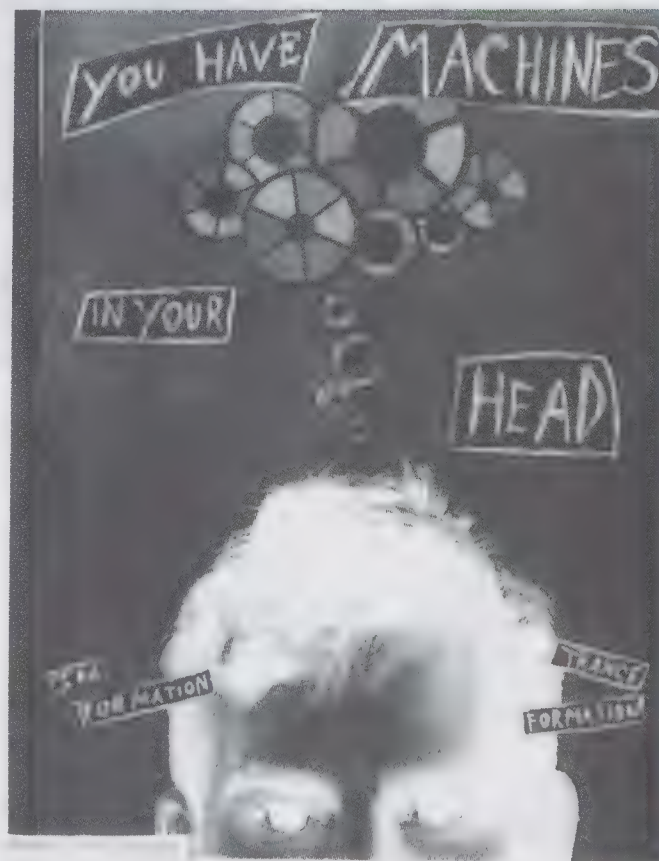
What Rodgers presents us with is a pile of heterogeneous ideas and provocations without a controlling framework, ideology, or voice to guide us easily through the book. Aptly, the book's title offers multiple interpretations, all pertinent.

On one level, these essays are one representation of an "invisible generation" of anarchists who came into their own on the cusp of the internet's ascendancy, within the intersection of ontological anarchy and punk-inspired zine culture. The book exhales this atmosphere.

Generation can also speak to new creation, beginnings, birthings. These essays call for the generation of continual insurrection from materials invisible to the technological panopticon: underground communities, intransigent individualists, and discourses that have been discarded or marginalized.

The more traditionally-presented tracts are alternated with starkly photocopied collage-essays, which will be instantly familiar to anybody involved in punk or zine communities. It took me back to my own introduction to anarchy through the hardcore punk scene, that took the form of a slew of one-off or fourth-degree distro copies of short pamphlets, zines, lyric sheets, and flyers by unknown and anonymous authors, distributed for free or at cost.

It was experienced as a mass of partial and contradictory ideas, desires, mantras, and expressions whose very irreducibility is what gave them power. Not only did all of the works collected here arise from this context, but the arrangement and



from Jason Rodgers, *Invisible Generation*

complex relations between them evokes that rich anarchy of discourse and presentation. Given Rodgers' intense involvement in this network of publication and dissemination, it would be nice to have included dates and publication histories for the pieces, even if the latter could only be partially reconstructed.

For these reasons, readers looking for a comprehensive system of anarchist thought in *Invisible Generation* will feel thwarted. But if there are more critiques than solutions, this is not accidental. It is the expression of Rodgers' mistrust in all

over-arching systems as forms of social planning, insisting that “rather than create a social program, resistance could come in the form of becoming a glitch in the cybernetic system.” She offers us a collection of provisional gestures toward new ways to frame resistance and generate new forms of anarchist praxis, as well as direct provocations that operate on the reader almost physiologically through artistic and poetic means.

Certain themes rise repeatedly to the surface and permeate the book, subtly brought out by the ordering of the texts. The “planetary work machine” of the subtitle designates the most consistent concern. A relentless critique of digitized culture, drawing heavily on anarcho-primitivist theory, but avoiding prescriptive or dogmatic positions, instead focused on teasing out the effects of the contemporary system on the psychological, social, and ecological planes. In multiple shards of text, Rodgers reveals the ways in which computer-logics of control and surveillance are extending beyond machines themselves to inhabit our social structures, personal interactions, and individual processes of thought and self-formation.

The mistrust of social planning which informs Rodgers’ anti-tech position also affects her insistence on a post-Left (though unambiguously anti-fascist) conception of anarchy, founded in the egoist tradition, but with a firm insistence on the social and collaborative capacity of egoism as conceived by 19th century philosopher Max Stirner and others.

Ontological anarchy is called upon to generate radically subjective psycho-social forms of resistance against the dominance of the objective machine-consciousness, as Rodgers delves into mystical, magical, Discordian and antirational strains of anarchy. She emphasizes insurrection on the micro-cosmic, nearly-invisible scale of personal praxis, on unique relationships of elective affinity, and on the revitalization of off-line culture: “The totality invades every facet of life. Struggle must thus occur in every facet of life. Alternative practices of nomadism and invisibility become necessities in the asymmetrical conflict.”

The variety of texts is the result of their genesis in the zine network. The book’s subtitle distinguishes between “Rants, Polemics, and Critical Theory,” so each category uses a different voice to respond to a different function in anarchist textual culture. Many of the rants are densely-collaged posters or handbills combining image and text made for easy distribution in the mail or in public spaces, deploying poetic and artistic techniques in the tradition of Dada, Situationism, and Punk.

The voice is urgent, tending paranoid, almost despairing, often evoking the claustrophobic manner of conspiracy theory without being such. They aim not at logically convincing, so much as activating and radicalizing the unconscious anxiety

produced by the surveillance society, instigating and stimulating the reader’s perception of the workings of the Machine around and within them.

The “polemics,” on the other hand, are equally urgent, but the voice is committed, angry, yet controlled rhetorical calls to action and empowerment. They participate in a long tradition of street-level anarchist propaganda. The language is compressed and concise, emphatic in tone, the arguments kept simple and intuitive for accessibility, though drawing upon a great deal of discourse and thought. These include handbills and posters as well as more traditional essays initially published in zines.

The “critical theory,” finally, reveals the subtlety of Rodgers’ thought. Most of these essays address similar themes to the other pieces, in a more discursive and subtle manner and more measured tone, drawing more explicitly on a wide body of critical writing. A few are direct responses to specific situations, events, or current debates within anarchist and zine subculture. These are handled in an even-handed and nuanced manner, avoiding defensiveness, exaggeration and ad hominem insinuations. There is no trace of the paranoia invoked in the rants.

In gathering all of these little fragments of rebellion together, Autonomedia has done us a great service and rendered the deeper unities and

complexities of Rodgers’ theoretical process to come across in a condensed form, illuminated by its own context rather than the scattered gleams available before.

Reading them one after another, rather than singly in their native habitats in numerous zines and mailings, can be anxiety-producing. The disjunctions and competing vectors of argument that the fragments present can overwhelm in their very success, especially thanks to the effect of the rants, whose unsettling tone un-deadens our responses to the oppressive conditions that surround us.

A steady diet of these rants, polemics, and essays is a sure prescription to guard against the self-satisfying spectacle of comfort offered to us on a hundred screens every day. Rodgers reminds us that the planetary work machine continues to extend its control in ever more deep-seated and insidious ways

And, more importantly, that our resistance to it can be just as intimate and invisible.

Olchar E. Lindsann is a poet, publisher, translator, and historian of 19th Century counterculture. He is the editor of mOnocle-Lash Anti-Press, with over 175 zines and books in publication at monoclelash.wordpress.com

Illustrations by Jason Rodgers.

Affinity and the Passional Conspiracy



collage by Jason Rodgers

STEP BY STEP, FEROCIOUSLY

Space is Not the Place

Space Forces: A Critical History of Life in Outer Space
Fred Scharmen
Verso, 2021

CHRISTOPHER CLANCY

The late stand-up comedian, Bill Hicks, used to close his routines with an idea. Take all the money allocated to the U.S. military each year, he would say, and instead use it to feed and clothe and educate the poor of the world, not one person left behind, then take whatever's left over "to explore space, together, both inner and outer, forever, in peace."

Fred Scharmen's *Space Forces: A Critical History of Life in Outer Space* is a critical history of the last 150 years of humanity's dream of exploring and living in outer space, beginning with Konstantin Tsiolkovsky, father of the Soviet space program, and finishing with recent efforts by Jeff Bezos and Elon Musk.

An architect and urban designer, Scharmen claims in his introduction that his history is by no means comprehensive. Still, his ability to work-in space-adjacent cultural references—from *Gravity's Rainbow* to *Roadside Picnic*, Timothy Leary to Carl Sagan, *Logan's Run* to "Whitey on the Moon"—lends his book the sense of no stone being left unturned.

The book's early chapters detail the visionary works of Tsiolkovsky, whose 1920 novel, *Beyond the Planet Earth*, provides "a road map for one part of the Cosmist Task: a demonstration that conscious collective human effort could overcome the circumstances set up by the blind forces in space."

Offsetting this socialist optimism is America's own Edmund Everette Hale, a Unitarian minister, whose 1896 short story, "The Brick Moon," recounts the trials and tribulations of a group of speculators who build and launch a satellite that serves as a habitable space station, eventually developing the means to live independently and secede from Earth.

What shines through in these early accounts is the notion that outer space served as the ultimate blank canvas upon which the future of humanity could be contemplated.



Illustration by Stephen Goodfellow

What Tsiolkovsky and Hale and others saw when they looked up at the sky said as much about *them* as what might really be out there.

"Any conception of a specific space is also the conception of a specific 'we' who that space is for," writes Scharmen. "Sometimes the conception of that subject reinforces existing power structures instead of offering new ways to live."

Our modern, technology-reliant age is introduced through the work of Irish physicist J.D. Bernal, who in 1929 envisioned giant spheres that replicate themselves, providing humanity with a potentially infinite number of safe, comfortable, Sun-orbiting habitats where "voluntary associations of interested persons would be the rule."

Still, Bernal seemed to recognize the wishfulness of his own thinking, later predicting, "Man will not ultimately be content to be parasitic on the stars but will invade them and organize them for his own purposes."

Enter Wernher von Braun, a Nazi SS officer and rocket designer for the Third Reich whose V-2 ballistic missile produced by prisoners at the Dora-Mittelbau concentration camp bombed London. In 1945, he was relocated to El Paso by the U.S. military to work with the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics to build America's first exploratory rockets, helping to launch the effort that would eventually result in tire tracks on the moon.

It's more than a little telling that, when von Braun looked up at the sky, he saw more war. His 1952 novel, *Das Marsprojekt*, tells the story of an arms race between Earthlings still recovering from a third world war and a highly organized, highly aggressive Martian race.

One highlight of *Space Forces* comes in Scharmen's accounts of institutional racism within NASA at the height of the space race in the 1960s. The contributions of African Americans like Jesse Strickland, chief architect of the NASA's Lewis Flight Propulsion Laboratory through that decade, and Katherine Johnson, whose calculations of orbital mechanics were essential to the success of early American spaceflights, were so shielded from public view that they were all but forgotten. That is, until the release of films like *Hidden Figures* (2016) ushered them into mainstream consciousness. With the Russkies breathing down their necks and *Life* magazine looking to run a cover story, NASA's "we" consisted exclusively of white men.

Going by humanity's most recent spaceflights, the reinforcement of existing power structures is the only reason to go into space. Jeff Bezos and his Blue Origin project (official slogan: "Gradatim Ferociter," or "Step by step, ferociously") is committed to the idea of humans living and working on satellites made from materials mined from other planets. As Bezos would have it, these people would occasionally be able to visit an ecologically revitalized Earth, presumably to see what a tree looks like. Nothing is said about who would comprise the sacrifice class doing the extraterrestrial labor to enrich the owners. One can only imagine a scenario like the early years of the Industrial Revolution with the lives of outer space workers being "nasty, brutish, and short."

Elon Musk and his SpaceX project aim to offer trips to Mars plus a solar powered yurt of one's own for as little as \$200,000. "And Mars would have a labor shortage for a long time, so jobs would not be in short supply," Musk said

in 2016.

Our ongoing conquest of space depends not just on the visions of billionaire CEOs. The technology necessary for space travel requires a centralized nation state spending its citizens' tax dollars. There's also the necessity of a cutting-edge military capable of providing the security to protect

these corporate interests on and around other planets. Perfect timing, then, that former President/Space Force Commander Donald Trump signed an executive order in 2020 denying outer space as a "global commons," hence leaving space open to whatever new forms of extractive capitalism our billionaires can come up with.

Fun fact: In *Das Marsprojekt*, von Braun named his military space unit "Space Force of the U.S.A."

Scharmen writes, "If the would-be Moon and asteroid miners want to extend

the status quo, it's not hard to imagine that the Space Force exists in part to defend that status quo. Dominance is the dominant paradigm, and unless it is undermined, it will remain so."

Challenging, if not undermining, the currently dominant paradigm, are organizations like Maine-based Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space, created in 1992 to build consciousness and constituency to protect space from escalating militarization and its attendant miseries. So far, their criticisms of the march toward U.S. military dominance of the heavens is relegated to a black hole in political space, swept aside by the giddiness around dreams of conquering the cosmos.

Scharmen concludes his history with a call for "messy thinking," or the realization that outer space remains, for the time being, a mostly blank canvas, one where conscious collective human effort overcomes blind force and even Bill Hicks's ideas have a chance.

"One reaction to this situation might be to fall back on a naturalized false realism: the wealthy and elite get to do things that ordinary people don't," the author writes. "But the world is more full, more complicated and messy than all that, and so are other worlds."

Christopher Clancy is the author of the anti-war dystopian thriller *We Take Care of Our Own*. He lives in Nashville with his wife and daughters.



The Pandemic Profiteering of Jeffrey Preston Bezos

The \$1 trillion wealth gained by the 651 billionaires in the first nine months of the pandemic shutdown was more than it would cost to send a stimulus check of \$3,000 to every one of the roughly 330 million people in America.

Laughter of the Sinners

This anti-novel points a middle finger at any and every preconception regarding reality

Lives of the Saints

Alan Franklin

Black and Red, Detroit, 2022

SUNFROG

Alan Franklin dropped his book, *Lives of the Saints*, into a world where the final years of the last century seem like a distant dream. Where our then dramatically dire descriptions of accumulated misery were actually more understated prophecies than the mere screeching wheels of an overblown cerebral car-crash on the freeway of our shared consciousness. That is to say, Chicken Little was right, and so were the angry writers at publications like *Fifth Estate*. As bad as we told you it was then, it is worse now.

When I interviewed Alan Franklin for my *Babyfish* fanzine some 34 years ago, he was a singer/songwriter/lead guitar with the ska/rock/punk/world beat band the Layabouts, he talked about how his songs like "I'm Tired," dealt as much with the problem of everyday life as they did with the "isms" that were wrecking our world, then as now. These points of reference are helpful to the reader as you buckle into the bold and bawdy brain-melt that is this book. Like the few minutes of "I'm Tired," more than a few chapters wrestle with the insanity and inanity of everyday life, not as dry theory, but as imaginal theater, dripping with dark humor.

Lives of the Saints is an amorous anti-novel, a religious tract for the anti-religious, a morning meditation for the people that hate morning meditations, a middle finger wagged with crass sass at any and every preconception regarding reality.

Is it a novel? A novella? A manifesto of meaningless meaning? The flash-fiction of one who is inappropriately flash-

ing us? An antidote to the progressive meanness of civilization? A sinful salvation from the snarky error of original sin? Is it one narrator or many? Which "I" is speaking now? Which "they" or "you" is that, to the narrator we might ask.

You can turn to post-modern literary theory for help with understanding what the theorists call "slippage," for Franklin's many narrators appear addicted to such free play. That's not to say he isn't serious, he is, but don't take him so seriously you miss the many-headed jester that jokes inside these chapters. The laughter of the sinners is what saves the lives of these saints. Inherent indeterminacy, delightful deconstruction, slippery slippage, forever, amen.

Each of the many vignettes could be an intoxicated vision, enjoyed on its own, if by drunk we actually mean the hangover of a million Monday mornings, an endless life shackled under authoritarianism, capitalism, and sexual dysfunction, yet somehow kicking at the mundane with irrepressible and irresponsible smirk. The stories and dialogues in this text work mysteriously and magically as anti-parables, with interlocking and overlapping threads that pierce the reader's skin, injecting just enough narcotic and drawing just enough blood to get its audience ad-



photo: Alan Franklin

dicted to the book's fierce yet fruitless pursuit of resolution.

Burroughs, Miller, and Freud are back from the dead with a devious treatise that will live in your head, long after turning the last page.

Having penned work appearing in these pages with a variety of bylines since 1988, Sunfrog is an abolitionist activist, poet, essayist, DJ, teacher, and theologian who lives in "Tenasi," the traditional land of the Cherokee people. He is the author of *Don't Touch Your Face: poems from a pandemic* and the curator of mixtapes at teacherontheradio.com.

Run Home if You Don't Want to be Killed:
The Detroit Uprising of 1943
Rachel Marie-Crane Williams
UNC Press 2021

White racist violence and Black responses

Detroit, June 1943

SEAN ALAN CLEARY

Rachel Marie-Crane Williams's new graphic history examines the violence that erupted in Detroit during the summer of 1943 in 230 evocative and beautifully rendered black and white images and text. But erupted might be the wrong word to describe what has been called variously a race riot, a pogrom, or, as Williams says in her title, an uprising.

The basic event began as fights broke out in a vast expanse on Belle Isle, a city park in the Detroit River, between groups of Black and white working-class people out on a hot Sunday afternoon. But it quickly spiraled into two days of violence, largely inflicted by police and white mobs on Detroit's Black communities of Black Bottom and Paradise Valley.

Was what happened, white supremacist mob violence and Black defense, panic, and fear, and retribution, an eruption of tension, or was it a slow building up of an ever-present violence in American life? Does the word eruption itself let the very real perpetrators of that violence, and those that encouraged, it off the hook?

Langston Hughes's poem, "Beaumont to Detroit: 1943," was perhaps the first attempt to put the nature of the violence that summer into words. Hughes's poem takes as its addressee an America that he's fed up with. It's a country on a war footing. A country asserting that it is unified against fascist aggression.

But, ironically, it's a white nation that Hughes knows doesn't include himself. "Looky here, America," he begins with a delicious sort of antagonism. Hughes knows that at this point, in this war, the main character of the American drama is not the communities within its borders struggling against white aggression.

It's not the only time he addresses America as a whole in a poem, for sure, but "Beaumont to Detroit: 1943," has a fed-up-ness to its address all its own—a preview of his later, and much more famous, "Harlem" with its often-misinterpreted threat of "or does it explode?"

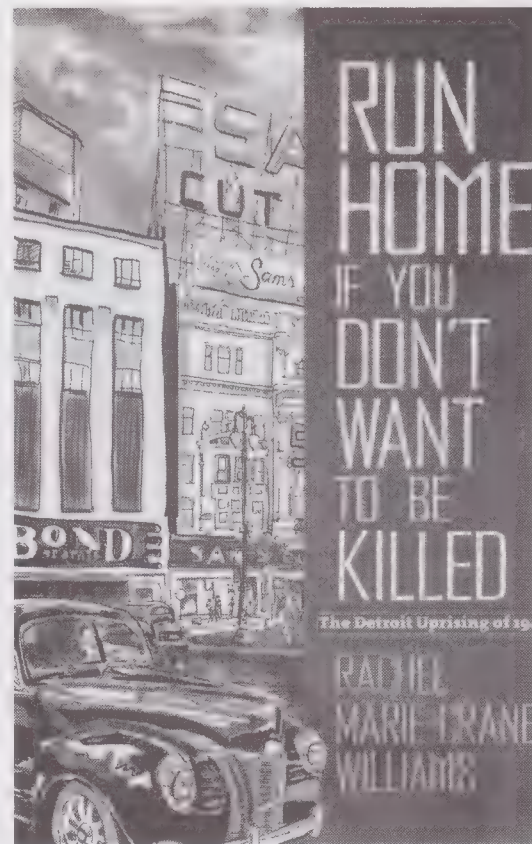
Hughes's poem, even in the moment of the summer of 1943, understands its causes. "Now your policemen," he writes, "let the mobs run free." The attacks are coordinated, if only implicitly, with the authorities; a way to uphold the racial order of a white-supremacist state.

Whipped into a mob, Hughes explains, white America had let loose violence on Black communities across the country in a paroxysm of anti-Black violence, partly, he says in emulation of the very fascist the country opposed.

Even at the time, some contemporary accounts considered the Detroit riots a pogrom of the type waged against European Jewry. One observer describes how even before the two deadly days in June, white nativist gangs, the Ku Klux Klan chief among them, patrolled the edges of Black neighborhoods with the blessing of the police looking to enforce racial barriers and drive Black communities into fear.

It was clear, even then, that it was not just economic uncertainty that drove the violence. It's this dynamic between white supremacy and economic competition that Williams's graphic history sets out to understand. She makes use of extensive media research, first person accounts, photographs from June 1943 and its aftermath, and semi-fictional scenes that bring a reader into closer contact with the personal paranoia, fear, and violence that exploded on the Belle Isle Bridge and spread across the city's Black neighborhoods.

Her book gives us insight into how people on the streets fled for their lives,



how Black men, harassed by police sent to keep the peace, were detained, beaten and killed. We see kitchen table conversations of the type of near-to-life fictionalizations that animate many good documentary films. But we also see the recorded testimonies of Black men and women caught up in the violence like James Reid who witnesses the murder of Julian Witherspoon by a white police officer, and who was later himself shot while in police custody.

But Williams also grants space to the political lead-up to June, with State actors of an entrenched Federal government hand wringing over the "racial tensions" at play in wartime America, while clergy and leaders of the NAACP met and discussed with a federal administration more concerned

with the production and propaganda of war than with an obligation to justice.

Williams's figures are drawn masterfully in a style that evokes the heavy dark lines of wartime newsreels, but can achieve the intimate focus on the faces of her characters reminiscent of Dorothea Lange's or Walker Evans's haunting documentary photography work in the 1930s and '40s.

It's especially the eyes of her characters that Williams's takes a deft hand in depicting. And like Lange's and Evans's work, Williams's graphic history (in some marketing materials also called a graphic novel), attempts in the faces of its characters to tell a larger story of how state indifference to the structural violence of segregation and ghettoization of Black communities can spiral into attacks by an embittered white working class.

At times, the narrative focus of the piece can be too pointed toward offering a political and economic understanding of the lead up to June, instead of generating a more complete picture of any of the individual actors or communities. In fact, a larger, sustained understanding of the communities of Black Bottom and Paradise Valley might have created a better through-line for the story. Instead, Williams focuses on the big points of history in the lead up: the aborted 1941 March on Washington, FDR's Four Freedoms speech, and the fight over segregation in the armed forces and defense industry.

Surely, these are the big political moments and questions that contributed to the general situation in Detroit. And, although we fairly quickly transition to the city, Williams never

quite gives us a story of someone integral to violence, or defense that day. If we are to understand those days as an uprising, as she says in her title, it's difficult to do so without a clear sense of what a community defense might have looked like.

Part of this effect comes from Williams's use of vignettes instead of central main characters, something employed in other historical documentary forms like film, but in the graphic narrative form, loses something of its inertia. She attempts to formulate the violence of what she calls an uprising itself as the main driving force behind the narrative.

But the violence and reprisals are presented by Williams as part of a two-sided spiraling of rumor and fear dependent on what Williams calls "each community's worldview." This too closely hems to a so-called balanced narrative that can be more accurately cast within the structural violence of American white supremacy, and the sometimes chaotic reaction and defense against it.

This is where contemporaneous understanding of the violence of June 1943 as a pogrom, and Hughes's evocation of the America outside himself that he's fed up with could better understand and represent what happened on those two chaotic days. Even if their historical is narrowed by proximity, their understanding was from the inside.

Sean Alan Cleary is a teacher and writer from Cambridge, Massachusetts. You can find his work in *Gulf Coast*, *Public Books*, *Puerto Del Sol*, *Another Chicago Magazine*, and at seanalanccleary.com.

Don't Look Sideways

As a comet approaches, the masses make light of their impending demise

Don't Look Up

Dir: Adam McKay 2021

Planet of the Humans

Dir: Jeff Gibbs 2019

WILLIAM R. BOYER

"You guys. The truth is way more depressing. They are not even smart enough to be as evil as you're giving them credit for."

—Kate Dibiasky (fictional astronomer in *Don't Look Up*)

So, what to make of an unusual film about a streaking, earth-bound comet colliding with present-day distractions? Does it shake up the entertainment cycle only to disappear like a fairly close

asteroid missing our orbital self-importance?

The uncomfortably salient, darkly comedic satire, *Don't Look Up*, rapidly unveils its timely set-up with the help of a hefty Hollywood A-list cast. The unheeded doomsday plot maneuvers around the dire warnings of chief astronomer Dr. Randall Minty (Leonardo DiCaprio) clashing with President Orlean (Meryl Streep), the dismissive Trumpian/Clintonesque Commander-in-Chief. She snickers and swaggers before eventually agreeing to an attempted mining of this hurtling Mt. Everest for precious metals, ignoring the real threat is a wipe-out of the planet.

In other words, the billionaire class trumps annihilation. Technology, the

prez assures us, will save the world, or at least some of its VIPs. As the movie frame almost always includes someone looking down into a flickering screen, the sidetracked masses make light of their impending demise.

Smartly directed by Adam McKay, previously best known for *The Big Short* (2015), a bulls-eye mockery of the Great Recession and credit default swaps. Here, he rather brazenly shows how the apocalyptic drama can be subverted into nervous laughter, like fun-house mirrors of our troubling modernity. Significantly, he cleverly avoids specifically identifying either political party, while creating fake networks and consumer electronics. His critique hints at demanding radical systemic change, not eliminating a few bad red or blue apples.

Two key supporting characters, Brie Evantee (Kate Blanchet), as an uproariously superficial Fox-News-Good-Morning-America-like clone, and Peter Isherwell (Mark Rylance), a passive-aggressive billionaire tech guru, steal al-



From left, Jennifer Lawrence, Leonardo DiCaprio and Timothée Chalamet in the film "Don't Look Up."

most every scene they're in with their humorously chilling reproductions of all too familiar talking heads.

"Everything's fine," becomes Isherwell's (and the nation's) mumbling mantra. Perhaps the film's best deadpan hilarity, features Isherwell's headset microphone Tim Cook/Elon Musk-like presentation to an enthusiastic shareholders meeting. His new product rollout, the "BASH Lüf" phone, features a sensory app responding to any negative thoughts with an individually designed cheery video feed.

Soon, the BASH corporation will be called upon to save the world. A satellite video feed for a spellbound global audience will even capture the anticipated techno-cure.

The humor predictably dissipates as the comet hurls closer. A surprisingly moving last supper deepens the film's emotional impact. Oddly, the only real family depicted in the movie accepts their unavoidable termination, settling down tenderly to their last rites between jump cuts of street rioters, drunk newscasters, polar bears, humpback whales, honey bees and other forms of soon-to-be-extinguished life.

The film's ambitious targets: climate change denial, corporate capitalism, vacuous leadership, contemporary consumption, superstition over science, lunatic conspiracy theories and the failures of both mass media and social media, consider the grim possibility of the planet's not-so-distant extinction in terms of technology run amok. The message works for the most part, even if the medium cannot reconcile its own internal contradictions (for instance, production of typical full-length fea-

tures can easily create over a hundred thousand tons of plastic, plywood and related consumer waste).

At the very least, this cinematic mimicry helps expand an urgent discussion, while spoofing key distortions of the day. It invokes comparisons to how Stanley Kubrick's 1964 masterpiece, *Dr. Strangelove* satirized a potential nuclear holocaust or Terry Gilliam's *Brazil* (1985) comically exposed the brutality of the modern surveillance state.

Hollywood satire can essentially trace its more political origins to Charlie Chaplin's *The Great Dictator* (1940), yet even Chaplin later regretted being way too soft on Hitler's fascism. In film, the typically much less costly documentary form usually remains best suited for ringing much-needed alarms.

No documentary better captures a *Fifth Estate* perspective on the desperate ecological conditions of our times and the humanoid source of this catastrophe than *Planet of the Humans* (2019). Directed by Jeff Gibbs, a northern Michigan environmentalist, and produced by filmmaker Michael Moore, yet with Moore thankfully letting the soft-spoken Gibbs control the muckraking footage and narration.

The sober documentary is free and uninterrupted on several platforms (as of February, YouTube recorded over 12.4 million views), thanks partly to Moore who recently admitted to reassessing his liberal activism for some of the more radical measures advocated in this important film.

Gibbs makes compelling arguments against modern capitalism (and its apologists) by focusing on the imperative of reducing mass consumption, the an-

tithesis to the capitalist requirement of ever-expanding production and consumption,

The visuals of environmental destruction contradict interviews with industry spokespeople, as the director carefully deconstructs the false comfort of biomass, wind and solar industries for their continued reliance on fossil-fuel grids and thoroughly destructive resource depletions (sample revelation: solar energy panel utilizes mined, high-purity quartz and coal, NOT sand).

Celebrity environmentalists such as Al Gore, Bill McKibben, and Hugh Evans tout false carbon footprint reductions and other forms of empty virtue signaling. Their phony New Age, neoliberal environmentalism includes cringy public confessions of their many corporate sponsors in the oil, lumber, paper, and related polluter industries.

The backlash to the film has been intense, if not vengeful (YouTube briefly shut down access to the video and McKibben seems furious at even being questioned about his corporate alliances), yet the critique holds well three years later. Gibbs challenges viewers, even would-be allies, to reassess the conditions of their existence. He suggests massive economic reductions as the only truly redeeming practice of the popular "Reduce, reuse, recycle" Earth Day slogan that sees the last process in the triad as a last resort. Not the first.

Maybe one day the *Fifth Estate* will venture into film making. After all, we helped publicize the long, sometimes colorful fight to shut down the world's largest trash incinerator from the earliest days of the struggle in the late 1980s, as well as many other confrontations against various industries, technologies, and the widely accepted veneration of so-called growth.

Frighteningly, the two films reviewed here may be more prescient than imagined, and by the next decade, an actual apocalypse will upstage all our projects and best intentions.

In the meantime, don't look sideways.

William R Boyer is el jefe sindical (union boss) for his school district on the Detroit border.

How to print zines, posters, flyers, and stickers

THE OLD FASHION WAY

A reminder that printed matter was often the key to social change in earlier years

Cheap Copies! Cheap Copies! The OBSOLETE! Press Guide to DIY Hectography, Mimeography, & Spirit Duplication
Rich Dana
Obsolète Press, 2022

PETER WERBE

The first question many people have when looking at a how-to manual like this one is, why bother? What's the motivation for doing something the hard way with antiquated techniques and materials? Scouring junk shops and the internet for the equipment and supplies, that, in printing, have been made obsolete by the machines that produce what you're holding in your hands—computers.

Rich Dana, a frequent Fifth Estate contributor, answers the question in an opening essay. He writes, "Zine makers appreciate the commitment and physical work involved in their craft. They embrace their obscurity and celebrate the ephemeral. They are about process and not product."

That Dana adheres to these definitions is obvious in the pages of *Cheap Copies!* He's not thinking in terms of mass circulation publications in this book, but small batch, highly crafted reproduction that will have limited distribution. More art than mass media.

Fewer and fewer people under 40 probably even know (or care) what the duplication methods explained here in such exacting detail are, although the history of each technique has its own interesting tale. These are methods that predate going to Kinko's for punk fliers in the 1980s or sneaking out leaflets for your next demo on the boss's photocopying machine in the '90s, by at least a century. But, even those now ancient methods are almost 50 years old, so imagine what had to be done when it

was the hand cranked mimeograph machine that had to be turned 5,000 times so an anti-war or civil rights group could flood the town with announcements of a meeting or rally.

The details of how to prepare stencils, where to search for materials, and how to operate an antique machine probably can be skipped, but there is something fascinating about imagining someone following these precisely described procedures to print leaflets, for instance, for the 1963 civil rights March on Washington, and know that mimeo machines were whirling like this all across the U.S.

When the Fifth Estate had a physical office and published weekly or every other week in the late 1960s and 1970s, the paper had a Gestetner Mimeograph machine that was in constant use by high school activists, union dissidents, as well as women's, civil rights, community, and anti-war groups. It allowed those rebels, cut off from communication by large institutions to, as what was said back then, "get the word out."

Dana's personal history that begins the book, of his involvement in the fanzine movement from where he started in New Orleans, emits something palpable for what has been lost before those who made up its core "eschewed pamphlets and broadsheets in favor of tweets and memes." Almost all publications strive for an increase in circulation, the larger the better. But, not Dana and his fellow zinesters who think small. The author jokingly refers to his manual as a "small-batch artisanal technical manual."

Since *Cheap Copies!* is meant for practical usage, it's spiral bound, allowing the practitioner to spread out the pages while following the "Hecto Step-by-Step" guide, for instance. "Pour mixture sloooowly into the tray," state



Mimeograph art: cover of *The Floating Bear* #34, 1967, edited by Diane Di Prima and Leroi Jones

the instructions. "Coax the bubbles to the edge of the tray. . ." Not fascinating to you since you'll never actually do this (I read them all just out of curiosity)? Skip to some of the biographies of practitioners contained in the text.

There's the brief story of Diane Di Prima and Leroi Jones (later known as Amiri Baraka) teaming up to publish the first edition of *The Floating Bear* in 1961 as a mimeograph newsletter that gave space to some of the great, yet marginalized voices of the era. Or, the obscure hectographer, Mae Strettkov, whose life travels from homes in China and Argentina, didn't stop her from being a prolific producer of zines sent across the world around the same time.

A limited-edition *Cheap Copies!*,

prior to the one now available, used examples of the method discussed to print a particular page describing how to use them, so that some are not as easy to read as what is spit out of your HP computer printer. But, no matter. The reader gets the feel of what it must have been like to get one of these texts in a much bygone period. Or, looking at a printed page in an archive.

It's not just art or keeping alive old techniques for their own sake, although

that's part of it, sort of like growing heirloom tomatoes. Dana reminds us that printed matter was often the key to social change in earlier years. That the tyrant always suppressed the printing press. That small printing methods is where unrepresented communities, artists, and political dissidents could express their thoughts, their creativity and criticisms, and their dreams.

Dana dedicates his book "To the Weirdos." To those who still want to

hold paper in their hands upon which are written words of enjoyment or importance without having to stare into a computer screen.

Cheap Copies! is available from the author at obsolete-press.com

Peter Werbe is a member of the *Fifth Estate* editorial collective. He is most recently the author of *Summer on Fire: A Detroit Novel*. peterwerbe.com. He lives in the Detroit area.

Clancy's novel starts with everyday work-consume terror, then **THINGS TAKE A STRANGE TURN**

We Take Care of Our Own
Christopher Clancy
Montag Press 2021

DAVID ANNARELLI

Imagine Amazon, Walmart, Exxon, Mobil, Pepsi, Coke, Fox News, Blackwater, the AMA, and Haliburton all rolled into one messy Play Dough ball of a supraconglomerate. The only corporation.

Add the military, and you have USofA Worldwide with its finger in every pie, in bed with everyone and everything. And, it's leading the War on Terror around the world the way a rock band goes on tour.

Christopher Clancy, whose writing appears in this magazine, has written a political satire and Orwellian warning that is a little closer to home than many of us would care to acknowledge.

Set in Fiscal Year 20__, the world is in a perpetual state of war against terror as much for stock market prices and entertainment as for safety and security.

The book follows Linda Held, a single mother of a son with cystic fibrosis, who is pursuing a medical career while trying to hold together her life. She applies for a job with USofA World Wide that has implemented a pilot program dubbed SoldierWell that offers psychological support to returning veterans of the ongoing wars to cope with their PTSD.

Using the INSIST Technique, the brainchild of SoldierWell Director Miles Young, USofA sets out to correct the thinking of emotionally devastated soldiers. However, it isn't long before a more nefarious and ulterior motive seeps in from the shadows, lurking and ugly.

The book screams everyday America; right here; right now, and has all the trapping found in your daily news feed. Video games based on ultra-violence—*Terror Busters 10K*—which is also the entertainment on TV, and at stadium mass rallies. The

ginned-up war on terror dominates life.

At one point, the protagonist parks in a lot at one of the rallies. "Then, up pulled an elongated golf cart driven by an older woman with a submachine gun hanging from a thin band around her shoulder and a ball cap that read 'Escort – Red Level.' You folks be wanting a life, I suppose," she said.

It isn't difficult to imagine our country just like this since we are a good part of the way there now.

As Linda begins her work with two soldiers back from the front lines, a sense of sympathy easily develops for the character. You want her to succeed. You want the therapy to work. You want the soldiers to heal.

Attachment to the characters grow. You care about their fate and... wait a minute. Things begin taking a strange turn... that is not good.

There's a point where you believe that things are going to turn out a certain way, but then realize how it's all going to end. It's not a surprise turnaround from what you expected though what comes in the last two pages, I only barely saw coming. But, no spoilers here.

The books contains good wit, relevant satire, and an engaging plot. But, satire as a forewarning for what this country could become. It's infrastructure is already in place.

David Annarelli is a father, musician, activist, and contributing writer to the Prison Journalism Project. He writes from the Pocahontas State Correction Center in Virginia where he fights to get back into court on exonerating evidence.

He was arrested inside his Virginia home during a severe mental health crisis in 2016. Instead of using de-escalation techniques, an officer who didn't identify himself, kicked open the door to the home and opened fire. David returned fire. Everyone survived without serious injury.

David was charged with malicious wounding of a law enforcement officer and sentenced to 20 years in prison.

Just another rusty seismographkid

Steven Cline wants to re-invent Play

AMOK

Steven Cline

Trapart Books, 2022

JASON ABDELHADI

A lone hitchhiker sticks out his thumb on a dusty Georgia backroad. He is wearing an all-white paint suit, clutching an ambiguous briefcase. His bearded face is ornamented in haphazard colors, ghastly reds and yellows. Disturbingly, he is not wearing any shoes. Does he not know where he is headed? Maybe he just wants to go, to go out there, to go with you, to show you... What? Do you pick him up?

If you did, maybe you were the vehicle that picked up Steven Cline as he spontaneously hitchhiked away from the Polymorph Bodyshop Surrealist exhibition's opening night in 2019.

Cline, a frequent contributor to this magazine, is a Surrealist, organizer, anarchist, explorer, and dreamer who has made many discoveries in a variety of fields: collage, critical writing, poetry, games, objects, photography and even ritual performance.

He has been a longtime catalyst for the marvelous, the revolutionary, and the strange both internationally and in the Atlanta area. Along with his wife Hazel and comrades in the Atlanta Surrealist Group / House of Mysticum, he has undertaken many astounding initiatives and published a plethora of zines, books, and journals.

Often to be found in the front lines of any number of fearless collective endeavors, in this volume, we finally get Cline the thinker-tinkerer in a corner by himself. Made up of a variety of critical, poetic, political, and automatic texts, *Amok* shows us the swirling vortex of anarchic creativity of a hungry body-mind that won't settle for anything less than everything.

This is a book that bites. Cline has long made known his special admiration for the Surrealist Benjamin Pérèt of the first-generation Paris Surrealist Group. Pérèt was known above all as embodying the principle of Surrealist attack.

In this spirit, Cline lets loose a sparkling combination of automatic eros and uncontrollable frenzy that nevertheless manages to capture key theoretical, critical, and political insights into the current situation. What's astounding is his capacity for a simultaneous double-pronged attack, both highly analogical imagery and critically astute commentary. It's a mystery how he does it.

Perhaps he is able to create a schism in the poetic waterfall just long enough to insert some(sur)rational comment before plunging back into the torrent. In some ways, his punny and playful combination of critique, humor, criticism and vivid, often blasphemous poetic imagery also reminds one of the old IWW columnists of the *Industrial Worker* newspaper. I am thinking especially of the great T-Bone Slim.

The fundamental insight of this



Collage by Steven Cline

thread being, that play is the means that justify the ends. Or, in Cline's own words, "Just another rusty seismographkid, writing underneath that eternally shifting, marvelous starsign —PLAY..."

In the title piece, "Amok," Cline invokes, through a delirious and humorous chattering, the spirit of total revolt, the vein that pulses throughout this entire collection. He dialectically splits up his

surrealism into a tripartite goal: “the liberation of the world,” “the liberation of the word,” and “the liberation of the mind.”

To Cline, these three tasks are one and the same. Total liberation is simultaneously a social, poetic, and psychic emancipation. In sympathetic vibration are the other calls to action in the book, including the text, “Minneapolis Athanor,” which was written at the height of the George Floyd protests in 2020 and reads as an impassioned plea for imaginative and political liberation in totality in the face of catastrophic authoritarian racism. It first appeared in the Fall 2020 Fifth Estate.

Among my favorite texts are examples of pure Surrealist research and play. In “The Santa Thing,” Cline mythologically explores a long-held conviction of his that Santa Claus is a monstrous cryptid.

In “The Great Savannah of Ottawa,” Cline and his wife Hazel outline their attempts to explore Savannah, Georgia using a map of Ottawa, Ontario. In so doing, they perform a Surrealist displacement of space and perhaps even a thinning of the poetic veil with as-

tounding results. Many of the texts veer into a kind of “poetry by other means,” ranging from a Surrealist anthropology of early human evolution, the deep psycho-traumatic implications of exploring a crawl space, to abject poetic musings on defecation, and even an eroticized etiological mythology that turns scripture on its head: “In the beginning was pleasure.”

Cline also partakes in the long tradition of Surrealist film criticism. With a taste for the shocking, marvelous, pulpy, and atmospheric, Cline avoids the usual aesthetic or formalist assessments and instead uses his love for film as a window for interpreting and transforming the world itself.

In “An Attempt at a Busby Berkeley Exegesis,” Cline plunges into the director’s unhinged musical choreographies, reading them as some hidden paranoid recipe for unleashed desire, “a secret magical working.”

His love for the gruesome and shocking horror comes out in “Guinea Pig 6” and in “Lucio Fulci’s Conquest.” He turns to the delirious world of pulp Italian fantasy to draw out his own apology for the passions of novelty and

novelty of passions. A further essay on the riches to be found in the “Trash Stratum” of popular culture underscores this vital Surrealist natural resource, the extremities of popular culture.

Among all the prose marvels, it’s also worth mentioning that the book has a nice selection of black and white photos, found illustrations, and other sights that show strange, but shockingly compelling confrontations, serving as the perfect analogical commentary to the writing.

The afterword by the longtime Surrealist Mattias Forshage captures the thrust of Cline’s project perfectly, comparing thinking itself to a “useless” and therefore “interventional” activity, a kind of “toy.”

For those looking for an ecstatic, erogenous, poetic experience, *Amok* is your ticket to escape your own skin.

Jason Abdelhadi lives in Ottawa, Ontario. He is involved in local and international Surrealist activities, including the Ottawa Surrealist Group, and is an editor for the Surrealist journal, *Peculiar Mormyrid*.

Like a Hitchcock thriller with smart devices Even an agoraphobe can't be alone

Kimi

Dir: Steven Soderbergh, 2022

JOHN THACKARY

Director Steven Soderbergh is well-known for both prolific output (an astounding 47 films and counting) and speed of production (roughly a movie a year over the past decade). Yet his work’s quality seems not to suffer from such a pace.

On the contrary, something about its fleetness belies a fascinating realism of the outlandish. Fittingly, in Soderbergh’s latest, his third collaboration with the streaming arm of HBO, a film simply titled *Kimi*, a villain’s posture bumbles unceremoniously. A tech millionaire conducts a Zoom interview in his garage before a pitiable, fake bookshelf background. The manner in which these characters are painted, all through edits and camera framings, bleeds with an obscure intentionality. Form as function.

Kimi leaves its mark perhaps more in terms of sincere generic resurgence and philosophizing than stylistic or polemic mastery. It’s a happily mood-obsessed, feather-light pandemic-era thriller, but, in Soderberghian fashion, aesthetically sporting little acquiescence to the society which it dra-

matizes.

For a story taking place during the pandemic years, it blessedly avoids the current events pandering existing within so much other filmic COVID-sploitation of recent memory. The virus acts as a happenstance plot mechanic rather than a gimmick in this narrative. We follow the agoraphobic, “Alexa”-esque-Smart-Device-monitoring tech company employee Angela (Zoë Kravitz) as she attempts to survive cat-and-mouse pursuits with hired goons intent on disappearing her in order to suppress the latter’s public exposure of her employer’s involvement in a heinous murder. Her awareness of the crime only comes about when, unbeknownst to the perpetrators, its evidence coincidentally and traumatically is overheard by Angela during her work rounds observing audio from the smart device that gives the film its title.

If this miniature of a story sounds as though it hails from the cinematic landscape of the year nineteen-hundred-and-ninety-three, one would be hard-pressed to not deem that a fair call. As we find ourselves today continually devoured by a



Zoë Kravitz as Angela in *Kimi*

machine of finance-capital-dependent franchise and reboot-based filmmaking, a simple and original work of intrigue and interpersonal anxiety such as *Kimi* feels like the freshest of breaths of air.

The musical score of *Kimi* admittedly reads as a bit overbearing if only because it may act as consonant with the rest of the film's homage to the similarly voyeuristic melodramas of yore (i.e., Hitchcock's *Rear Window* (1954)). So, granted, this may or may not be everyone's cup of tea, stylistically. But despite that nostalgia, the film's modernizing of the formula excitingly complicates these tropes.

The presence of the pandemic gives an anxious character an out in justifying her overwrought, lonely response to civilization's horrors. A protest in her city against houseless encampment sweeps by police, thematically resonates. Angela's status as a brown-skinned woman adds layers of haunting subtext to her difficulty having any authorities believe her claims of having witnessed violence. The setting is dually isolating (therefore, heightening the stakes), the presence of a militant segment of its populace mirrors the unspoken desires of *The Hero*, and verbal veracity becomes not just a matter of mental health, but also one of systemically resultant subjectivity.

Soderbergh crafts something here that visually evokes a radical perspective regarding the very concept of "being" as we conceive of it today. The camera's locomotion implies a certain mania, procrastination, and the simultaneous out-of-yet-in-body disorientations they entail. The lens' positions visually posit answers by excluding their questions, displaying a mutuality. Whose eyes are we seeing out of in any given POV shot if it's not Angela's? What does the refusal of Angela to touch her apartment key mean, as it sits plainly in close-up during her first multi-step preparation to finally venture outdoors? The film deals in the falsity of binaries as such, the ways they overlap rather than synthesize; relate rather than negate.

Kravitz's performance stands as one of her meatiest to date, perhaps along with her already critically hailed outing as Catwoman in the newest Batman film. Her success rests upon

physicality, and not her deliveries of the occasionally rote dialogue. Her outside-world-fearing downward stares, and tic-like comforts of hand movements and aurally satisfying clunks of a cell phone tossed onto desks embody a research-dedicated actor (as in, into agoraphobic tendencies), and also one interested in playing a person rather than a political slogan hellbent on denying the specificity of a given being who is nonetheless under the proverbial boot of an ableist and racist system of power.

Kimi seems to possess a conceptual insistence on action rather than posturing, whether political or otherwise. There's a scene in which Angela divulges her concerns to an at first seemingly well-meaning bureaucrat, before we witness a perversion of feminism and language into a mangled

tool of social stasis. Rita Wilson's acting turn as the aforementioned Suit sounds eerie echoes of how even certain strains of non-carceral conflict resolution have recently, unfortunately, devolved into bizarre, glorified forms of HR doublespeak. All talk and not a true change in sight.

Examinations of such disconnects persist in two remarkable sequences of visual superimposition; traumatic events or utterances layered atop images of someone finding out about those very events or utterances highlighting the direct interwoven nature of each and every one of our lives. One only exists (read as "is perceived") as a result of the other. Nothing stands isolated.

As the Speculative Realist branch of philosophy would note, "existence is coexistence." It is perhaps no coincidence, then, that this story centers a conflict with technology. Social media platform and smart-device saturations often alienate, separating us from the emotional consequences of our actions, from thinking deeply about their nuance in an affectively expansive manner. It's easy to turn your conscience off if you can do the same to the device which you think is the only avenue of expressing conscience itself.

In a finale that, delightfully, may one day be considered an all-timer of the "planting and payoff" screenwriting convention—these latter superimpositions of struggle under the stultifying weight of Leviathan culminate.

Maybe your creepy neighbor isn't exactly who you thought he was. Maybe he's just like you. Maybe that one, loud machine that usually distracts you from your inner-peace can save your life in one unexpected context.

And, maybe surviving and thriving when faced with social pain is as complex, ironic, and unquantifiable in its comfort as a blood-covered hand giving a wincing, but earnest thumbs up.

John Thackary is an essayist, filmmaker, and movie critic currently kicking around in the central Texas region. His hobbies include hiking as well as feeling anxious about every single thing humanly possible at once.

Twenty-four and Counting

Stemming the tide of Christian religious fervor

24 Reasons to Abandon Christianity: Why Christianity's Perverted Morality Leads to Misery and Death

Charles Bufe

See Sharp Press, 2022

DAVID ANNARELLI

Charles Bufe's jeremiad is a scathing rebuke of Christianity filled with lurid details that support the charge made in the subtitle of *24 Reasons*. It traces religion's fearmongering and fire and brimstone manipulation by faithful zealots in service to the powerful, but also chronicles its inherent dishonesty, authoritarianism, sexual morbidity, hypocrisy. . . well, it's a long list..

With glib humor and a no-holds-barred style, *24 Reasons* does more than just lift the veil from the hypocrisy of Christianity. It provides a concise link from religion as a means of control to the consolidation and mystification of power.

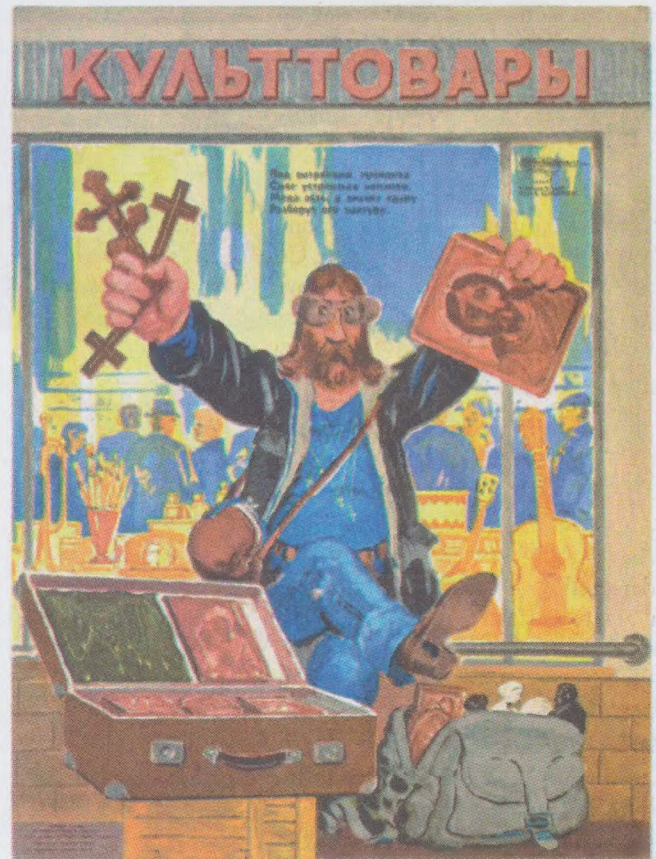
The history of the faith is meticulously detailed in chapters such as "Christianity Harms Children," and others that connect it with slavery, suppression of free speech, cruelty to oneself and others, how it degrades the natural world. . . well, it's a long list. I haven't read so many Bible verses since hitting the age of reason when I was 12 and turned my back on Catholicism and organized religion in general. I sought a deeper spirituality that, as Bufe points out, is not to be found in Christianity.

Bufe, who has written books with subjects as varied as the failure of Alcoholics Anonymous, a dystopian sci-fi novel, and a guide to music theory published by his See Sharp imprint, bolsters his argument with dismal statistics of abuse and corruption. The array of Bible quotes he presents should leave anyone with human impulses shuddering. Read Leviticus and Ezekiel for starters.

The frightening words of the Bible aren't just illusory and confused, they serve as the ethical basis for tens of millions of practitioners. Liberal Christians try to give the worst of what purports to be the words of a god a better interpretation than what is on paper. This amounts to how the late comedian Bill Hicks put it. "I think what God *meant* to say was. . ." Yes, the liberal reading of God's calling for the stoning of gays and adulteresses, or genocide of a people who has offended him is better than what it actually says, but it says what it says, and it has been acted upon throughout the ages.

The title of Dan Barker's book, *God: The Most Unpleasant Character in All Fiction*, is a good summary of the murderous and intolerant writings of Christianity, but people often act politically based on fiction, such as Ayn Rand's drivel.

Bufe suggests a quick exit from a horrid spirituality with its bad story of original sin and threats of eternal punishment,



Cultural Goods Poster, 1984 This poster depicts Jesus as a capitalist hawking his wares. The caption reads, 'Under the shop window this weasel has set himself up nicely. There's a foolish fashion that means they'll snap his junk right up.'

In the Soviet Union, atheism became government policy, enforced by the state and encouraged by anti-religious posters and magazines. These have been collected in Roland Elliott Brown's new book from Fuel, *Godless Utopia: Soviet Anti-Religious Propaganda*.

Officially-sanctioned atheism such as in the Soviet Union can be just as oppressive as religious dogma.

but doesn't examine how this "perverted morality" took root. Hopefully, at a time when increasing numbers of people are abandoning churches, this book will play a role in stemming the tide of religious fervor that has been the bane of civilization.

David was charged with malicious wounding of a law enforcement officer and sentenced to 20 years in prison.

HOW A FOREST REALLY GROWS

Finding the Mother Tree: Discovering the Wisdom of the Forest

Suzanne Simard

Alfred A. Knopf, 2021

MARIUS MASON

I was hanging out in the dayroom of the Federal Correctional Institution at Danbury, Conn. late last year. It was noisy with the sound of the guys playing cards and Scrabble, when a friend brought a book with an intriguing cover to the table. It was Suzanne Simard's *Finding the Mother Tree*, and it jolted me back to another place and time in my life, when so much of my world was about saving the trees from destruction. Her book is full of the wisdom gleaned from decades of careful and loving observation.

Simard shows us, in elegantly structured experiments, just how much we are missing of the constantly changing chemical messages/exchanges happening below the surface. The key to understanding how a forest really grows is in seeing how mutual aid, more than competition, is the predominant way all plants interconnect to help each other thrive. Interconnecting to the extent that forests constitute an actual community with constellations of mother trees sending out communications via chemical signals.

Their success is interwoven with the health of other species around them. It is a radical assertion, but it is carefully built upon powerful evidence. And, the implications are huge forcing us to reconsider what constitutes sentience. This falls well within a biocentric perspective and felt incredibly affirming for my own part as an environmentalist.

Simard's book is also a frank memoir of a woman well ahead of her time, caught up in self-discovery as she changes her relationship with family and her vocation—so much warmth is in these pages, and always guided by a deep love of the natural world. Her compelling work was known to the writer, Richard Powers, who based a character on her in his novel, *The Overstory*. In fact, one could speculate that it is Simard's research that drives the story Powers tells in his Pulitzer Prize-winning novel.

Don't be put off by the science, as Simard does a masterful job of making her insights very accessible to non-botanists. Read this book and you will see the world differently.

Marius Mason is housed in the men's unit at a federal prison in Danbury, Conn. In order to proceed to the next level of F-T-M transition, he must live in the men's unit for one year.

Mason stays active writing, reading, studying for two different educational certificates, and serving as mentor to fellow inmates. Letters are welcome. supportmariusmason.org.



Harriet and Harry T. Moore

Marius Mason was struck by the story of these early civil rights activists and their assassination by the Ku Klux Klan. He painted this portrait ("*Harriet and Harry T. Moore*", 2022) using prison coffee as the main medium.

The Moores incurred the wrath of the Klan for their advocacy of voting rights in segregated Florida in the 1940s. They were both killed on Christmas night 1951 by a bomb set at home in Mims, Florida, on Christmas night, 1951. This followed their both being fired from teaching because of their activism.

The murder case was investigated, including by the FBI in 1951–1952, but no one was ever prosecuted even though all evidence pointed to the Klan.

UKRAINE Continued from page 3

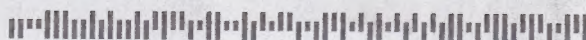
threats to all living creatures, including the nuclear danger, are rooted in the worldwide capitalist crisis.

Nevertheless, there are a few rays of hope piercing the fog of war. Not everyone is just listening to or watching the controlled media, in Russia or North America and elsewhere. A lot of people are actively seeking out other sources of info, including self-created ones and personal connections. States and corporate powers are not succeeding in monopolizing the information war. In the West and in the East, more people than might be expected have publicly and personally rejected the patriotic narratives and right-wing justifications, even when losing so much.

The last decades have seen the flowering of a wide variety of non-hierarchical grassroots resistance through collective action, solidarity and mutual aid projects in many parts of the world, including Ukraine and Russia. We need to remember that past movements like these have sometimes been able to topple dictatorships, remake societies, and turn the world upside down.

They very well might succeed in doing so again.

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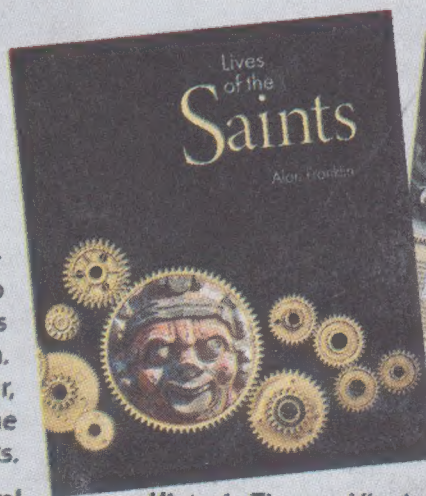
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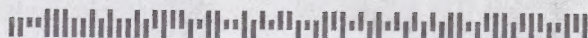
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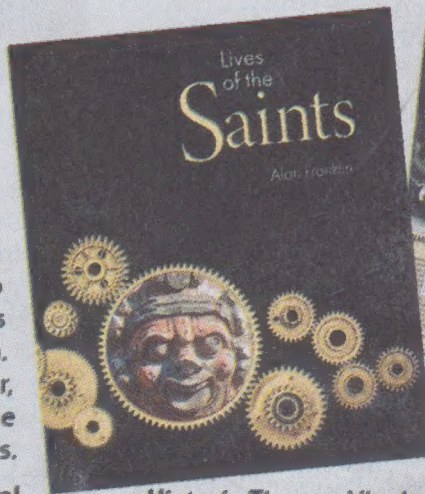
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